

THE COBURGS



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TO MR
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Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg



Portrait of Mrs. F. M. Taylor

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THE COBURGS

*THE STORY OF THE RISE
OF A GREAT ROYAL HOUSE*

BY

EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE

AUTHOR OF

"LOLA MONTEZ," "A QUEEN AT BAY," "THE BRIDE OF TWO KINGS," ETC.

*WITH PHOTOGRAPHURE FRONTISPIECE AND SIXTEEN
ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE*



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PREFACE

To the house of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha belong the kings of England and Belgium, the Tsar of Bulgaria, and the ex-king of Portugal. The Coburgs are allied with half the reigning families of Europe. Less than a hundred years ago their name was unknown outside their tiny patrimonial duchy in the heart of Saxony. It is interesting to trace their rise from obscurity to world-wide eminence. The ducal families were so large and the revenues so slender that the younger children were all turned adrift as in the fairy-tales, to seek their fortunes. The wars which followed the French Revolution gave these noble adventurers their chance. One of them—delightfully enough, the youngest of the brothers—won the heart and hand of the Princess of England. Naturally, in consequence of this alliance his family rose in the social scale. Every one was anxious to be connected with so desirable a family. Queens and princesses sought their hand, and when thrones fell vacant, Coburg princes were called upon to fill them. And the Coburg head seemed to fit any crown.

Thus the house became rich and powerful—not,

thanks to martial enterprise or to any commanding ability, but by carefully cultivating the best society and marrying the right people. The family went in for kingship as a profession. They studied the signs of their times and gave the public what it wanted. They had no particular principle except to continue governing. They were always abreast of their age, never before or behind it. They never jockeyed their subjects too vigorously forward, and they never plunged them in the mire of reaction. They were clever, but never great; and that is why the plain man liked them. They always let their people make the pace. They have been faithful if not enthusiastic upholders of constitutions and diligent observers of treaties.

It is the Coburgs who have made monarchy respectable. Before their time the king's trade seemed fit only for gilded libertines and gloomy tyrants. Leopold of Belgium and Albert of England changed all that. They introduced middle-class standards into the palace. They were excellent husbands and fathers, and showed the bourgeois that a king could be a respectable married man as well as he. And the bourgeois has loved them for their likeness to himself. Only one of the Coburgs ever married an actress, and he taught her to make her own tea-cakes. But adaptability is the one constant element in the race, and the Coburg princes can readily assume other than domestic qualities. The career of the reigning sovereign of Bulgaria shows how quickly those of his

blood can learn the methods of eastern intrigue and violence. The descendants of Ernest the Pious are indeed as much at home in Brazil or the Balkans as in London and Brussels. Their ambition nearly set Europe ablaze in the middle forties ; but only once, in distant Mexico, have they paid the penalty of failure. Very coolly and deliberately they have pulled the wires of European diplomacy, furthering their own interests and those of their peoples, and setting in motion forces much greater than themselves. They have stooped to conquer, and, by giving way, have always had their own way in the end. The prince consort when he came among us was the most unpopular man in England ; he died more powerful perhaps than his wife or any of her subjects. The Coburgs have gone far—they may go farther yet. To them more than any other royal house is reserved the task of reconciling the institution of hereditary monarchy with the needs of the adult nations.

EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE DUCAL HOUSE OF COBURG . . .	13

CHAPTER II

THE COBURGS AND THE REVOLUTION . .	35
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE	53
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

LEOPOLD AND THE CROWN OF GREECE . .	66
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

THE BIRTH OF BELGIUM	94
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI

BELGIUM WINS A LOSING FIGHT . . .	114
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII

A COBURG IN PORTUGAL	133
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII

	PAGE
THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND'S CONSORT . . .	157

CHAPTER IX

KING FERDINAND AND THE SPANISH MARRIAGES.	180
---	-----

CHAPTER X

EMPEROR, KING, AND PRINCE CONSORT . . .	207
---	-----

CHAPTER XI

CHARLOTTE, EMPRESS OF MEXICO . . .	235
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII

KING FERDINAND AND THE CROWN OF SPAIN .	264
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII

FERDINAND, PRINCE OF BULGARIA . . .	294
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV

FERDINAND, TSAR OF BULGARIA . . .	318
-----------------------------------	-----

INDEX	337
-----------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PRINCE LEOPOLD OF SAXE-COBURG.	<i>Photogravure Frontispiece</i>	
		PAGE
FREDERICK THE MAGNANIMOUS, ELECTOR OF SAXONY	.	33
<i>After Lucas Cranach</i>		
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AUGUSTA	. . . . .	51
BARON STOCKMAR	. . . . .	69
<i>After Winterhalter</i>		
THE DUCHESS OF KENT	. . . . .	87
QUEEN VICTORIA	. . . . .	105
<i>After W. C. Ross, A.R.A.</i>		
LEOPOLD I., KING OF THE BELGIANS	. . . . .	123
<i>After Winterhalter</i>		
FERDINAND, KING-CONSORT OF PORTUGAL, AGED TWENTY-		
ONE	. . . . .	141
ERNEST I., DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA	. . . . .	159
PRINCE ALBERT	. . . . .	177
<i>After W. C. Ross, A.R.A.</i>		
MARIA II. DA GLORIA, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL .	. . . . .	195
<i>After Sir Thomas Lawrence</i>		
PRINCE ALBERT AT THE AGE OF FORTY-TWO	. . . . .	213
<i>After a photograph by Silvy</i>		

	PAGE
ERNEST II., DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA . . .	231
MAXIMILIAN, EMPEROR OF MEXICO . . .	249
CHARLOTTE, EMPRESS OF MEXICO . . .	267
FERDINAND, KING-CONSORT OF PORTUGAL . . .	285
FERDINAND, TSAR OF BULGARIA . . .	303
<i>Photo by Pietzner, Vienna</i>	

THE COBURGS

CHAPTER I

THE DUCAL HOUSE OF COBURG

WESTWARDS from the kingdom of Saxony stretches the Thuringian forest, covering hill, valley, and plain for many a league with a rich dark mantle. It is a region haunted by the creatures of German folklore and romance. Belated wayfarers hear in the echo of the thunder the sound of the wild huntsman's horn and catch in the rustling of the leaves the whispers of the erl king. Along the woodland paths hastened St. Elizabeth of Hungary on her errands of mercy; and above the town of Eisenach still stands the castle of the Wartburg, where she dwelt and whence the minstrel Tannhäuser was charmed away into the Horsel mountain by the lady Venus.

On the outskirts of the forest, to the north and south respectively, lie Gotha and Coburg, graceful yet old-world little cities, which are jointly capitals of the duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. This is one of the seven petty states into which Thuringia is now divided, and one of the four which bear upon their escutcheon the crown of rue of the house of Saxony or Wettin. All these principalities are

very small—the largest, Saxe-Meiningen, is but a little larger than Cornwall; the smallest, Reuss, is considerably smaller than the Isle of Wight. Each, too, is made up of several detached fragments, so that it is hardly possible to take a long walk without crossing a frontier—generally denoted in chivalric fashion by a shield hung from a tree by the roadside. These shields have been shifted pretty often during the past six centuries, for the Saxon house, having made this land its own, has distributed and redistributed it over and over again among its members, knowing no law of primogeniture, and never, of course, condescending to inquire the wishes of the subjects transferred with the territories. At one time almost every village in Thuringia had its ducal court, modelled in miniature on that of Vienna or Versailles. It is not to be wondered at that so excellent a training ground for princes should at the last have been prolific of kings.

The Wettins came to this country already well equipped for the business of government. They were settled as barons at the castle on the Elbe from which they took their name in the first half of the eleventh century, and were invested by the Emperor Lothaire with the margraviates of Meissen and Lausitz, which embraced the greater part of modern Saxony. These territories lay then quite on the borders of civilisation, and wars with the Slavonic peoples to the east provided a warrior race with innumerable opportunities for distinction. When, too, silver was discovered in this, as in our modern borderlands, settlers hastened from all parts to the spot, the town of Freiberg sprang up as if by magic

on the site of the river, and the margrave Otto at once became one of the richest and most powerful magnates in Germany. The emperor thought of recovering this opulent fief, and to escape the very direct measures he employed to that end, one of Otto's successors found it prudent to seek a retreat inside a wine-skin. From this he emerged safe and victorious; and, thanks to his marriage with the heiress of the landgraves of Thuringia, his son Henry the Illustrious found himself in 1263 lord of that wide province as well as of his ancestral dominions along the Elbe.

The illustrious Henry esteemed his new possessions so highly that he bequeathed them to his eldest son Albert. This prince married the daughter of the great emperor Frederick II., but her rank dazzled him very much less than the beauty of one of her ladies, named Cunegonda of Eisenberg. His passion urged Albert to plot the murder of his wife; but his agent was stricken with remorse at the last moment, and the unhappy landgravine was able to make her escape from the castle. Her children she had to leave behind, and in the excess of grief at leave-taking, she set her teeth in the cheek of her son Frederick, so that he was ever afterwards known as the Bitten. She died two months after, owing to the hardships and perils of her flight. Albert promptly disinherited her children and married Cunegonda. His brother of Meissen intervened, and civil war ensued. The landgrave appeased his sons with certain fiefs, and presently startled them by selling Thuringia for 12,000 marks silver to Count Adolf of Nassau. Then from the ramparts of the Wartburg he calmly

looked on while his sons disputed their patrimony with the purchaser. The conflict was interrupted by Adolf's death. Frederick the Bitten, mindful of his mother's wrong, promptly turned his father out of the Wartburg, and left him to end his days in squalid poverty at Erfurt, about the year 1314.

The heirs, administrators, and assigns of the dead count of Nassau, however, were not disposed to relinquish his claim without a struggle. It does not appear that any one proposed to refund them the 12,000 marks paid to the reprobate Albert. The glens of the Thüringerwald were soon thronged with armed men, and lance-head, helm, and corselet gleamed from amid the thickets. The invaders were Swabians for the most part, and in those most parochial days, seemed as strange as Babylonians to the Saxon folk. They were worsted in a desperate battle at Lucka, where Frederick and his brother, of course, performed prodigies of valour. Their prowess was rivalled by that of an old lady, who, finding five of the foe concealed in her oven, killed them one after the other with a toasting-fork. Dieterich, Albert's younger son, was assassinated not long after, and the prince with the bitten cheek ruled in peace and prosperity over the united possessions of his house. Strange to say, this gallant warrior fell a victim at last to his extreme sensibility. In a mystery play acted before him at the Wartburg, the foolish virgins were represented as being thrust down into hell, despite the earnest entreaty of the Blessed Virgin. Whether he pitied their fate too keenly, or argued within himself that if the Virgin could not save them, there could be mighty little chance for him, I know not ;

but all are agreed that the melancholy produced by this edifying entertainment resulted in his death in the year 1324.

As time passed, the frontiers of the empire were pushed ever farther eastward, and Frederick's descendants reigned over Thuringia and Meissen in great contentment. By marriage and purchase, they acquired the town of Coburg in Franconia, and Saalfeld in the principality of Schwarzburg—places to be associated with the most illustrious of their posterity. In 1423 the fortunate house was raised to further dignity. In reward for services rendered by the margrave Frederick the Pugnacious, the needy emperor, Sigmund, invested him with the dukedom and electorship of Saxony; further adding the important privilege of sealing with red wax. This may have been in commemoration of the Bohemian blood shed by Frederick in his crusade against the Hussites. He was succeeded by his two eldest sons, who were to rule jointly. The older, who bore his father's name, was surnamed the gentle or the Benignant; the younger, William, was a haughty, headstrong man, who, it was said, made all Saxony shake when he crossed his courtyard spurred and armed. Like his ancestor, Albert, he neglected his wife for another woman, one Catharine of Hessberg, whom he afterwards married. The second wife revenged the wrongs of the first, and to propitiate Heaven, William first expelled all the Jews from his dominions and then went on a pilgrimage to the country of their origin.

The Wettins were generally unlucky in love. Another brother, Sigmund, fell in love with a nun,

and renouncing all his dignities, became a monk, in order to get near her. His plan succeeded, but no sooner had he won his way to the lady's heart than his scandalised brothers seized him and placed him in captivity. As he was in holy orders, they obtained him the bishopric of Wurzburg; but of this he was soon deprived, thanks to his unpriestly conduct. He then attempted to get a share in his brothers' inheritance. He failed, and passed the last twenty years of his life a prisoner in the castle of Röchlitz.

Frederick and William had their own quarrels from time to time, which were settled by the sword. On one occasion, William called in the Bohemians to his aid. They laid waste the country and took prisoner Kunz von Kaufungen, Frederick's ablest captain, who was forced to ransom himself for 4,000 gulden. In sore need, the Saxon elector appealed to the emperor, who drove out the savage invaders and healed this dangerous breach between the brothers.

This obscure campaign was the cause of the best-known incident in the early history of the house of Saxony. Peace having been restored, Kunz von Kaufungen, who was a soldier of great repute, demanded compensation from Frederick for the losses he had sustained in his service. For all his gentleness and benignity, the elector resolutely withstood the claim, and banished the claimant. Kunz retired to a castle among the Bohemian mountains, where he waited for an opportunity for revenge. He found it when, on July 7, 1455, Frederick started on a journey to Leipzig, leaving his wife and two little sons in the castle of Altenburg. A few hours' riding brought the broken soldier and a party of thirty followers

to the little Thuringian town. With the aid of a traitor in the garrison, it was easy to scale the castle walls at dead of night, to lock the servants within their rooms, and to hurry the trembling boys down into the courtyard. Here a mistake was discovered. One of the boys was not the electoral prince, Albert. Kunz himself rushed up the stairs and dragged His Highness out from under the bed. Then he mounted him before him on his saddle and rode at full gallop towards Bohemia, while his lieutenant took the elder boy, Ernest, by another road. All that long summer day they went crashing through the bracken and brushing their way through the thick forest. The prince was faint with thirst. Kunz reluctantly halted to let him drink, while the rest of his men rode on. His compassionate impulse cost Kunz dear. A charcoal-burner, followed by his dog, loomed out from among the trees, and to him the kidnapped boy appealed for help. He attacked Kunz with his pole, and held him at bay till the barking of his dog brought some of his comrades to the spot. Kunz was taken. His lieutenant, meanwhile finding the whole country aroused, took refuge with his prize in a cave. Hearing what had befallen his chief, he surrendered Prince Ernest on condition that his life was spared. The two boys were thus restored to their parents, the charcoal-burner was rewarded with a snug farm, and Kunz von Kaufungen paid the penalty of failure on the scaffold at Freiberg.

The heroes of this adventure have given their names to the two great branches of the house of Saxony. On the deaths of their father and uncle, they ruled for many years jointly, after the strange

fashion of their family. On August 26, 1485, however, a partition was agreed to at Leipzig. Albert, as the younger, was, according to the Saxon law, allowed his choice. He took Misnia (the modern Saxony), to the surprise and disappointment of Ernest, who had to content himself with Thuringia and the country round Wittenberg. As the elder, he retained the electoral dignity. It is from him that the dukes of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and the three other duchies are descended. With the posterity of Albert, who now sit on the throne of Saxony, we are not concerned. But for this and subsequent divisions, it has been said, the Wettins might have played as great a part in Germany as the houses of Austria and Hohenzollern. They would not, however, have played as great a part elsewhere, and their princes would not have been so well fitted to wear the crowns of young and struggling states.

The imperial crown was, in fact, offered to duke Ernest's son and successor, Frederick the Wise. He refused it, as he also refused a bribe from Francis I. of France, another candidate for the dignity. He practically decided the election of Charles V. This Frederick was the most remarkable man of his line. He contributed to the advancement of the arts and learning by his patronage of the painter, Lucas Cranach, and by founding the university of Wittenberg. At that seat of wisdom he appointed Martin Luther a professor, and so unwittingly secured for himself a conspicuous niche in history. He backed the bold Augustinian in his controversy with the papal legates, and secured him a fair hearing at Worms. Then, seeing that his life was in danger,

he had him waylaid near Eisenach and carried off to his castle of the Wartburg. Saxony was now making history for all Europe. To restrain what he considered the extravagances of his followers, Luther was suffered, ten months after, to return to Wittenberg. He was not ungrateful to his protector; for three years later we find him vigorously upholding the authority of the German princes, and urging them to stab, kill, and strangle the wretched peasantry who had risen to demand the practical application of his own doctrines.

Frederick died in May 1525. He had sowed the wind and his successors reaped the whirlwind. There were dark days in store for the line of Ernest of Saxony. John the Constant, the new elector, subscribed to the confession of Augsburg, and having advocated the free interpretation of scripture, forbade any one to celebrate masses for the dead within his dominions. His subjects were, however, perfectly free to think as he did. His son, John Frederick, joined the league of Schmalkalden. Charles V. launched against him the ban of the empire, and utterly defeated the Protestant forces at Mühlberg. The elector, despite his Herculean strength and stature, was made prisoner. He was hurried before the Flemish Cæsar. "Most gracious emperor," he began. "Ah, I am now your gracious emperor," interrupted Charles. "It is long since you called me so." The electress Sybilla, sister of Anne of Cleves, still held out in the fortress of Wittenberg. The emperor threatened to throw her husband's head over the ramparts, and the place was surrendered. The defeated prince purchased his life on ruinous terms.

To change his religion he obstinately refused ; but his fiefs were for the most part confiscated or transferred to his wife ; his electorship was given to his cousin, Maurice, of the younger line, and he was condemned to remain a prisoner at the imperial court. At Augsburg he witnessed with stoical composure, the investiture of his kinsman with his lost electoral hat, and was then carried off to Innsbrück in the Tyrol.

Five years later, the wheel of fortune turned. Maurice rebelled against the emperor, who at once turned John Frederick loose again. He hastened back to Thuringia, where he was met at every town by processions of citizens and girls with flowing tresses garlanded with rue. To his wife, Sibylla, the emperor had assigned Weimar, Eisenach, Gotha, and Jena, and to these domains was at this moment added the territory of Coburg, held for ten years past by a younger son of John the Constant. The year after his release, Sibylla died. "Leave a place for me beside her," said John Frederick ; "I shall soon want it." He died, in fact, eleven days later, on March 3, 1553.

Ill luck continued to dog his house. It must be admitted, too, that all the wit as well as the good fortune seems to have gone to the younger or Albertine line. John Frederick II., now duke of Weimar, Coburg, and Gotha, was notorious as a fool. Impostors and adventurers flocked from far and wide to his court as to the promised land. He parted with much of his treasure to a lady who represented herself to be his aunt, Anne of Cleves, the discarded wife of Henry VIII. In return for the duke's assistance,

she promised him a share of the wealth she had brought from England, but which she could not immediately produce. She proved to be one of the queen's waiting-women, and the cause of the mischief between her and Henry, as some say. A more interesting impostor was a visionary named Tausendschön. This man told his credulous highness that angels had assured him that a prodigious quantity of gold would shortly be discovered near Gotha, by means of which the duke would recover his father's electorate. These angels, he said, were about the size of boys three years old, and had shrill voices; they came in and out of a hole in his cellar, and were suitably dressed in ash-coloured garments and black caps.

To this story the delighted John Frederick listened agape; and presently he extended his protection to Grumbach, a notorious bandit and outlaw, whose assistance might (he thought) be useful in the approaching campaign. As he persisted in harbouring a criminal, he was put under the ban of the empire. His kinsman, Augustus, the elector of Saxony, attacked him, and twenty years after his father's defeat at Mühlberg, he found himself a prisoner in his little capital, Gotha. Grumbach was seized, and was quartered while alive, according to the disgusting practice of these sixteenth-century savages. Tausendschön was hanged, and many others beheaded. The scaffold set up for this bloody work was sold to a peasant, who made a comfortable home out of it. The duke was imprisoned at Neustadt, where his wife joined him. They died about the same time, after twenty-eight years' captivity.

Their sons, John Casimir and John Ernest, were

brought up at the court of Augustus of Saxony. In 1570 a part of their father's territory, including Coburg and Eisenach, was allotted to them, while Weimar went to their uncle, John William. Casimir married Anna, the daughter of Augustus, and settled down at Coburg. He cared a great deal more for hunting than for his wife; and soon exhibited the credulity of his father. He was only a very petty prince, but he seemed to an Italian charlatan, named Scotto, well worth exploiting. This man wormed himself into the duke's confidence as an adept in magic, and easily persuaded the duchess that he was her best friend. To secure her husband's love, he told her it was necessary that she should become a mother. As she afterwards confessed, she went to his apartments, where he laid upon her hand a pasteboard cross, marked with magical symbols and covered with wire. He then muttered an incantation; the wire wound itself round her fingers; and he took full advantage of her helpless situation. He assured her that she would suffer great hardships and die before her husband, unless she willed his death; which she would not do. The Italian, having pledged her to secrecy, soon afterwards left Coburg, carrying with him great part of her jewels. To console her for his absence, he introduced to her a young knight, named Ulric von Lichtenstein. The two came to love each other too passionately for their safety. John Casimir discovered that he had been duped by his wife and by Scotto. He seized the lovers and extorted from them a full confession. His judges sentenced them both to death; but realising that the tragedy had been brought about by his own folly,

the duke commuted the penalty to lifelong imprisonment. The poor young duchess was divorced and confined in the fortress of Coburg. Five years after, the duke married a second time. The first wife was apprised of the event by means of a medal and a print, where she was represented in her penitential garb on one side, and her husband and his new bride embracing, on the other; underneath ran the derisive legend:

“Wie küssen sich die zwei so fein!

Wer küsset mich, armes Nonnelein?”¹

Fortunately the brutal John Casimir left no children, and died twenty years after his first duchess, and in the same year (1633) as her luckless lover, Ulric von Lichtenstein.

If, however, we are to believe a chronicler of the ducal house, the unhappy pair were reconciled after all. More than eighty years after, a certain Duke Christian reigned over Saxe-Eisenberg, one of the diminutive and ephemeral states into which the family had divided their possessions. This prince, like John Casimir, was a student of alchemy and had very nearly exhausted his slender revenues in the course of his researches and experiments. One day as he lay meditating in his laboratory, he heard a tap at the door. Surprised that any one should have been able to pass his guards unannounced, he bade the visitor enter. A handsome woman stood before him clad in the dress of a bygone age. “I am,” she announced, “your dead kinswoman, the Duchess Anna of Coburg.” The duke’s wig rose

¹ “How well these two kiss! Who will kiss me, a poor little nun?”

several inches above his head, as he stammered out his gratification at this unexpected visit. The spirit then told him that it was in his power to bring about a reconciliation with her husband, and to release him from his present most uncomfortable situation between time and eternity.

Christian, who was a pious man, asked for a few days in which to consider this proposal. He then consulted a learned divine, who advised him to prepare himself for his mediation by prayer and fasting. When the duchess appeared again, he informed her that he was ready to do her bidding. A night was appointed, and the duke stood ready to receive the unhappy pair with bell, book, and candle. At eleven o'clock they came, floating in through the doubly locked doors. The duke, we may suppose, looked with considerable curiosity at John Casimir, who was in no good humour. Husband and wife stated their case, and the arbiter unhesitatingly found in favour of the duchess. He then joined their hands and gave them his benediction. All three intoned the *Te Deum*, and the proceedings terminated. Before flitting off, on what was probably a rather extended second honeymoon, the lady told Duke Christian that he would ere long be with them and would receive his reward. Probably he had expected to be informed of the whereabouts of the philosopher's stone in return for his good offices, but he profited by this hint and prepared himself for his end. He died two years later—about 1707—leaving his principality and an empty treasury to the collateral branch of Gotha.

The blood of the second John Frederick was ex

hausted, but the line of Ernest was perpetuated through his brother, John William of Weimar. The alliance, brief though it was, of his aunt, Anne of Cleves, with Henry VIII., seems to have turned this prince's thoughts towards England, and he conceived hopes of restoring the shattered fortunes of his house by a brilliant marriage. He is mentioned by Jewel among the suitors of Queen Elizabeth. Had she favoured him, the accession of his house to the English throne might have been anticipated by three hundred years. As it was, he had to content himself with a bride of lowlier station, and his sons had only their patrimony and the lands of their cousins of Coburg and Eisenach to divide between them. One of John William's grandsons was the renowned captain, Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, who fought beside Gustavus Adolphus at Lützen, and whose sword hangs as a glorious trophy in the Spanish king's armoury at Madrid. Aiming at a larger realm than a few acres in Thuringia, he allied himself with the French, and drove the imperial troops from Alsace. Just as the province seemed within his grasp, he was cut off by poison in his thirty-fifth year.

At home his kinsmen continued to make principalities by means of pen and parchment. The ravages of the Thirty Years War must have rendered the upkeep of so many thrones a terrible burden to the people and have shown the need of consolidation. But these considerations could not prevail against the custom of the house. Bernard's eldest brother took Weimar, where his descendants reign to this day. To Ernest the Pious, another brother, fell nearly all

the west of Thuringia. This patriarch had no fewer than eighteen children. Luckily for the country, only seven sons survived him, and among these his dominions were of course split up. Three of them, including Christian the Ghostseer, died without leaving children, and their lands were shared by their brothers, the dukes of Coburg-Saalfeld, Gotha, Meiningen, and Hildburghausen.

By this time the map of Saxony resembled Joseph's coat. It was plain that if the process of subdivision were continued much longer, none of the states would be large enough for its own ruler to stand upon. That all children, male and female, should inherit equally is the only just and sensible rule, as far as private property is concerned ; in the case of sovereign states, it spells extinction for all. Very reluctantly the duchies one by one adopted the law of primogeniture, coupling with it the excellent rule that the heir should make proper provision for his brothers and sisters—unlike the harsh English system, under which he may leave them penniless. Gotha was the first to set this example ; and well it was for her she did so, for her ducal house multiplied exceedingly, and Frederick II., who died in 1723, had, like his grandfather, a family of eighteen.

The wisdom of the new principle was also very soon shown in another direction. Having no prospects of sovereignty at home, the cadets of the house went to seek their fortunes abroad. Inspired by the memory of the great Bernard, Frederick II.'s younger brother, John William, served under William of Orange in the Low Countries, then under Charles XII. of Sweden, and gloriously finished his

career under the orders of Prince Eugene, at the siege of Toulon in 1707.

His travels and exploits made his house favourably known at the northern courts, and when our George II. caught sight of his niece, Augusta, at Herrenhausen, near Hanover, he decided that she would be just the wife for his son. The insignificant "Fed," with unwonted dutifulness, said he was ready to marry any one his father chose, and Lord Delawarr, a most unprepossessing envoy, was dispatched to Gotha to ask the young lady's hand. Her father and mother and her seventeen brothers and sisters jumped for joy. This was not a match to be despised by the line of Gotha. Her Highness was at once packed off to England, and after twelve days' travelling, reached Greenwich on April 25, 1736. Her brother, then duke, visited her some years later, when he was made a knight of the garter and attacked with the measles. Horace Walpole, in a letter dated November 30, 1743, is found regretting that there was no Saxe-Gothic prince whom he could send with a dog to Florence.

Through Augusta the blood of the houses of Saxony and Hanover was first mingled. She never became queen of England, as we know, but she was the mother of our George III. She was not a very remarkable person, and her life was not happy. By her insistence on the domestic virtues, she reminds us of her more illustrious kinsman at the English court a hundred years later; and to her repeated adjurations to her son, "Be a king, George!" we owe some curious chapters in our constitutional history, and not improbably the loss of the American colonies.

Some time before Augusta's marriage, the law of primogeniture was adopted by her cousins of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. In consequence of this, perhaps, the heir-apparent to the dukedom, Ernest Frederick, was able to contract a very brilliant alliance with Sophia Antoinette, the sister of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and of the queens of Prussia and Denmark. This princess, remarked her grandson, King Leopold, "in a great monarchy would most certainly have played a great part—perhaps not of the mildest, like her sister, Queen Ulrica of Denmark. She ruled everything at Coburg, and treated that little duchy as if it had been an empire. She was very generous, and in that respect did much harm, as she squandered the revenues in a dreadful manner. The duke stood very much in awe of his imperious wife. . . . She was, in fact, too great a person for so small a duchy; but she brought into the family energy and superior qualities above the minute twaddle of these small establishments." It was probably at this proud lady's instigation that Ernest Frederick, on his accession, engaged in a long and complicated lawsuit with his neighbours over some petty towns and bailiwicks, as the result of which he piled up the respectable debt of 1,073,000 florins. As his annual revenue did not exceed 70,000 florins, the little state was plainly insolvent, and at the demand of its creditors, its finances were taken in hand in the year 1773 by an imperial commission, over which the Duke of Gotha and the Prince of Hildburghausen presided.

It was as well, therefore, for the impoverished state that the duke's three brothers had gone to seek

their fortunes abroad. One of them, indeed, after some service in the Austrian army, had broken down in health and had come home to die. Another, Adolf, a romantic soul, whose device was *Tout par amour, rien par force*, had been killed, wearing the Saxon uniform, at the battle of Striegau; but the youngest, Frederick Josias, had to some extent revived the military glories of his house. He fought for Maria Theresa against the Prussians, and rose to high rank in the imperial service.

When Joseph II. invaded Serbia at the head of an army of 100,000 men, the prince of Coburg was detached with a *corps d'armée* of 20,000, to co-operate with Suvorove in the Danubian principalities. The emperor was badly beaten; but his lieutenant defeated the Turks in several engagements and drove them out of Wallachia. He was entrusted with the negotiation of the peace which followed, and was rewarded for his brilliant services with the baton of a field-marshal and the grand cross of Maria Theresa. But more serious work was at hand. The French revolution broke over Europe like a thunderstorm, and Frederick Josias was ordered to the west. He routed the French at Neerwinden and drove them out of the Low Countries, but before he could strike another blow he was approached by Dumouriez, the opposing commander, who had resolved to destroy the republic. As a pledge of his treachery, the French general handed over to the Austrians the representatives of his government who had just reached his camp.

On April 5, the two commanders issued manifestoes, the one calling upon the French troops to

deliver France from the tyrants who oppressed her, the other declaring that the Austrians no longer made war upon the French nation but would, if required, assist them in restoring the constitutional monarchy. To conciliate the republicans, Coburg rather curtly dismissed the royalist émigrés from his camp. But Dumouriez was repudiated by his men, and the prince was obliged four days later to repeal his proclamation and to renew the declaration of war. His haughty attitude and his relations with Dumouriez made him peculiarly hateful to the republicans; and in those days to call a man an accomplice of Pitt and Coburg was the surest means of sending him to the scaffold. Meanwhile the imperialists were badly supported by the English under the duke of York, and the new French generals, Moreau and Jourdan, soon turned the tables on their enemies. Coburg was defeated at Fleurus and driven out of Belgium. Protesting that he had been badly served by his allies, he threw up his command, and retired to his native town. During his long life he had not shown himself unworthy of the stock from which sprang Bernard of Weimar and Maurice de Saxe.



FREDERICK THE MAGNANIMOUS, ELECTOR OF SAXONY.

After Lucas Cranach

CHAPTER II

THE COBURGS AND THE REVOLUTION

WHILE the fortune of the house of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld declined, its numbers multiplied. Francis, the son of duke Ernest Frederick, who waited gloomily for a bankrupt heritage, had by his wife, Augusta of Keuss Ebersdorf, four daughters and three sons. For a family so impoverished, a brilliant match seemed unlikely. The empress Catharine of Russia, the Semiramis of the north, was destined to play the fairy godmother. She was looking out for a wife for her second grandson, Constantine; and having heard a good report of the Coburg girls, she invited them, through her minister, General de Budberg, to visit her in 1795 at St. Petersburg. Accompanied by their mother and their eldest brother, Ernest, the three eldest princesses—Sophia, Antoinette, and Juliana—started on their long journey. They were all handsome; and Constantine chose Juliana, the youngest and prettiest, then only in her fifteenth year. It was a pity he did not choose Antoinette, wrote her brother in after years; “she would have suited the position wonderfully well.” As Constantine is described by one who met him a few years later¹ as the greatest monster she ever saw in a human

¹ Lady Burghersh.

form, it seems unnecessary to throw the blame on to his mother, who did not, we are assured, wish him to make a happy marriage. This sounds incredible, but if it is true, she was not disappointed. The match was eminently unsuccessful. The grandduke, it is admitted, was troublesome to get on with, though he admired his wife intensely ; and his brother Alexander (afterwards Czar) and his wife backed Juliana against him. So in 1802 she departed for Switzerland, without any formal separation ; and having rejected several offers of a reconciliation was divorced "by order of the Czar" in the year 1820. "All would have gone well," averred King Leopold, "but for the shocking hypocrisy of the empress mother."¹

To this unpleasant lady's brother, Duke Alexander of Wurtemberg, the second girl, Antoinette, was married, three years later. She lived a great deal at a palace prettily named Fantaisie, at Baireuth, and she often had her eldest sister Sophia to stay with her. A French emigrant in the Austrian service, one Emanuel de Pouilly, came that way, and Sophia fell in love with and married him, refusing, we are told, several more eligible suitors. Possibly she was impatient at having seen her younger sisters married before her. From this marriage the well-known Austrian family of Mensdorff-Pouilly derive their origin.

In the meantime, the grandfather of these princesses died, and in September 1800 their father, Francis, became duke. He found a whole host of émigrés

¹ Reminiscences of King Leopold : Grey's "Early Years of the Prince Consort."

devouring his substance, and enjoying the entertainment provided by his chamberlain, von Wangenheim, a man after the style of our George IV. By various devices the new duke got rid of these troublesome pensioners, and sent for a Prussian named Kretschmann to put his finances in order. This expert's policy was thorough. In a couple of years he freed the duchy from the incubus of the imperial commission, and composed many of its outstanding difficulties with Gotha and Schwarzburg. But to achieve these ends he screwed the last farthing out of the already-overburdened people, and by his reforms in the administration of the ducal household, caused an estrangement between his highness and his uncle, the veteran field-marshal. These disputes profoundly distressed duke Francis, who was the kindest and gentlest of men—"benevolence itself." In his worry and penury, he derived some consolation from the arts which he loved and understood, and more from his kind and high-minded wife, Augusta.

He must also have reflected with satisfaction that his children were likely to make their way in the world. In those troublous times it behoved every German princeling to lay hold firmly of the skirts of a great power. Juliana's marriage, unfortunate for herself, proved her brother's highroad to fame and fortune.

Russia was for many years to come to be Coburg's big brother and the sponsor of her princes. Ernest, the eldest boy, had no doubt had instructions to make himself agreeable to the mighty Czarina, and at the age of eleven she gazetted him a colonel in her grenadiers. Alexander subsequently made him a general in his horseguards. And though Juliana

deserted her husband, Antoinette, who went with Duke Alexander to St. Petersburg in 1803, soon became the bosom friend of the empress, and was thus able to put in many a good word for her family. In the same year Ernest got into the good graces of Frederick William of Prussia, and conceived a strong liking for him in return. Feeling, perhaps, that the northern courts had done enough for his house, Ferdinand, the second son, courted the favour of Austria. He was rewarded with a commission in Rosenberg's Light Horse, which, somewhat to his disgust, he was presently called upon to take up. In 1803 the duchess also persuaded her youngest daughter, Victoria Mary, then only seventeen years of age, to marry the hereditary prince of Leiningen,¹ a widower twenty-three years older than she, and reputed to care about nothing but field sports.

There remained at home with the duke and duchess of Coburg-Saalfeld only their youngest child, Leopold, who had been born on December 16, 1790. He was named after his godfather, the emperor. He has told us that he was the favourite of his imperious grandmother, so perhaps he was early distinguished in the crowded nursery of Coburg by the talents or good looks he displayed in after life. We learn that his education was entrusted to Herr Hoflender, the little state's minister of public worship and the head of the Collegium Casimirianum. By this sage, the little prince was instructed in Christian doctrine and ethics. After his confirmation, he studied Latin and Russian. On his own account he added French

¹ Leiningen was a mediatised state, divided between Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt.

and English to the curriculum, and showed a marked aptitude for drawing and music. In that dull age he was not probably suffered to indulge that passion for light literature which animated him in manhood. In arms, of course, which seemed at that time the only pursuit for the cadet of a German princely house, he was very carefully trained.

He was soon called on to show his soldiership. While his father lay slowly dying, the fifteen-years-old lad was summoned to leave the pleasant woods of Thuringia and to join the Russian army in Moravia. Napoleon had swept the Austrian army from southern Germany, and Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg had assisted at the catastrophe of Ulm. Leopold and his brother Ernest started too late. Before they had reached the Russian head-quarters, they heard of the rout of the Austrians at Austerlitz. Not very sorry perhaps to have missed that disaster, the princes went north to Berlin, where they met the grandduke Constantine. On the Unter den Linden every one was talking of the smashing the Prussians would give the French next year. Leopold returned home; Ernest followed him, but left again to join the King of Prussia's staff in September 1806.

Out of the smaller fragments of the old German empire Napoleon was busy forming his confederation of the Rhine. Of this, in July, he declared himself the protector and suzerain. This brought on the threatened war with Prussia and a renewal of hostilities with Russia. The unfortunate duke of Coburg, menaced by the all-conquering French on one side, and allied so closely by blood and marriage with their enemies on the other, knew not what step

to take. His duchy lay on the French line of march. It was unlikely that its neutrality would be respected. Ill-health and care had brought Francis to the verge of the grave. He abandoned his little capital, and with his wife, eldest daughter, and young Leopold, took refuge in his castle of Saalfeld, hoping to escape the whirlwind of war.

Instead, he found himself at the vortex. Lannes and Augereau passed through Coburg with their columns, and on the morning of October 10, appeared on the heights above Saalfeld. Before the town was drawn up the advanced guard of the Prussian army. The cannonade began, shells burst over the castle in which the sick duke lay, and the defenders were swept into the marshes of the Schwarza. As soon as the tide of battle had passed on, the ducal family hastened back, with what speed the encumbered road allowed, to Coburg, where the French were merely in occupation. The hereditary prince Ernest, on the other side of the forest, shared four days later in the rout of Auerstadt. When all was lost, he was one of the very few who accompanied the defeated king of Prussia from the field and escorted him in his perilous flight towards the Oder.

The other Saxon princes were not so faithful. They promptly deserted the sinking ship and prostrated themselves at the feet of the conqueror. Duke Francis bowed before the inevitable, and sent an envoy to solicit his admission to the confederation of the Rhine. But the horrors of the past few weeks had exhausted him, and he died at the age of fifty-six on December 9, 1806, before the treaty could be signed.

The French commandant at once inquired as to the whereabouts of the new duke. Some one told him that he was with the Prussian army. The attitude of the invaders immediately changed. Rejecting the old field-marshal's offer to assume the regency, Parisot, the commandant, took possession of the duchy in the name of the emperor of the French, and appointed an intendant, Vilain, who well deserved his name. A crushing contribution was levied on the people, and an ill-timed outbreak directed against the unpopular minister, Kretschmann, was misunderstood by the French and quenched in blood. The widowed duchess and her children were left wanting the necessities of life, and became dependent on the supplies surreptitiously obtained by their servants. This experience of the elemental hardships of life should have been useful to the future ruler of a nation so largely composed of labourers, miners, and factory hands.

Profiting by the appointment of a new intendant, M. Dumolart, a young man of good family, Duchess Augusta took the bold step of going to Berlin to lay her case before the emperor himself. He had gone on to Warsaw, whither she was not allowed to follow him. She was received kindly, however, by general Clarke, the French governor, and earnestly besought him to give effect to the negotiations begun by her late husband. She found an enemy in the regent duchess of Saxe-Meiningen, who wished to exclude Coburg from the new confederation, in the hope that its lands might be divided between hers and the adjoining states. Unable to do more, the duchess sadly returned to her two children in Thuringia.

Her eldest son through weal and woe stood fast by his fallen friend, the ruined Frederick William. He was the only Saxon prince that followed him beyond the Oder. There he placed himself under the orders of the Czar, in whose service he was nominally a general. He was attacked by typhus fever at Königsberg, and had to be dragged from his bed on the approach of the French. Crossing the Niemen, he was let fall in the water, and was with the utmost difficulty transported by a single faithful follower, Colonel Hardenberg, to Memel. There he lingered for weeks between life and death.

In April he took advantage of a lull in the hostilities to make his way into Austria. Thence he got to a quiet place near Baireuth, where his mother and brother were able to meet him. Then, taking Leopold with him, he retired to Franzensbad in Bohemia, to await the decision of the arbiter of Europe as to his ancestral state.

In July 1807 came the good news of the treaty of Tilsit. The Czar, unable to save Prussia, had obtained from Napoleon the reinstatement of his young kinsman of Coburg. Orders were sent from the imperial head-quarters to Colonel Parisot to evacuate the duchy and to surrender the duke's property. "It is the will of the emperor" (so ran the ordinance) "that the duke of Coburg is to be restored to the full and entire possession of his states, and that he shall be considered as a sovereign for whom his majesty entertains a particular esteem."

Ernest, now duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, certainly deserved the esteem of his fellow Germans for his loyalty to the fatherland. However, there was

nothing to be gained by further resistance at this juncture, and he hastened to Dresden to pay his respects to the Corsican Colossus. He was kindly received, and even promised an indemnity for the losses his principality had sustained. Napoleon hurried on to Paris, and the new duke made his entry into his capital on July 28.

Immediately after, accompanied by Leopold, he followed the emperor, and was among the crowd of sovereigns who thronged the ante-chambers of Fontainebleau during the autumn of 1807. Napoleon was too busy with the affairs of Spain to attend to the fulfilment of his promises to a petty German prince, and in April Ernest decided to invoke the good offices of his friend the Czar. He went to St. Petersburg, leaving Leopold sick with typhus at Coburg. The youth recovered very slowly, and went with his mother and sisters to recuperate at the Bohemian spas. At the beginning of October he and Duchess Antoinette were summoned by the Czar to attend his famous conference with Napoleon at Erfurt. He was not then eighteen years old, but his talent for diplomacy already manifested itself. He saw, he tells us, a good deal of Bonaparte, and would have succeeded in obtaining an addition to the ducal territory, if his brother had not always asked for a little too much, and if Alexander had shown more energy.

The brothers went home after the conference, and Ernest devoted himself to the development of his small patrimony, which had suffered severely during the war. He dismissed Kretschmann, who was suspected of having enriched himself at least as much

as the duchy. As a result of his alliance with the French, the duke had to furnish a contingent of his subjects to serve with the imperial armies. War with Austria broke out again in 1809, the European powers having decided apparently that it was better to fight the enemy single-handed than attack him all at the same time. The Coburgers were sent to the Tyrol, where they perished to the last man, fighting against men of their own race for a cause they hated.

Fortunately they were not opposed to prince Ferdinand, who stubbornly resisted the French advance at Eckmühl, and with his sister's husband, Mensdorff-Pouilly, fought in the bloody battles round Vienna. When Napoleon heard of this, he ordered Ernest to make his brother quit the Austrian service, and vowed that if he caught him, he would have him shot on the spot. The duke protested his fidelity to the emperor, but pleaded that he could not control his brother's actions. In proof of his devotion to the French cause, he equipped a fresh contingent of his miserable subjects, to serve as food for cannon in Spain. He is said to have secretly connived at the smuggling of arms from Coburg into Bohemia, but luckily for him, he was not found out.

Ferdinand meanwhile set the emperor's threats at defiance, and fought against him like a hero. At the conclusion of the war, the wind changed. Napoleon, on the eve of his marriage with Marie Louise, was all for Austria, and regarded Russia as the enemy. His resentment was now turned from Ferdinand to Leopold, who, he discovered, held a nominal rank in the Czar's army. "Wherever I go," shouted the

wrathful Corsican, "I find a Coburg in the ranks of my enemies." Champagny, his foreign minister, told Ernest that he must not expect the emperor to do anything for his foes, and that his youngest brother must at once discard the Russian uniform.

Leopold was thus called upon to sacrifice his best friend or to exasperate his most powerful enemy. In these straits, he journeyed to Paris himself, hoping to mollify the tyrant. He made a good impression at the Tuileries. Writing afterwards at St. Helena, his imperial host described him as one of the handsomest men then in Paris—"Brilliant, full of elegance, and eighteen or nineteen years old." But leave the Russian service he must, or (he was told) his brother should be stripped of his dominions. Leopold submitted, but Alexander, knowing what pressure had been brought to bear upon him, promised him that he would restore his commission at the earliest favourable moment. According to Napoleon, Leopold begged to be numbered among his aides-de-camp; according to the prince the proposal came from the emperor, and he was able to evade it only with the help of Queen Hortense and "old Josephine." The friendliness of the queen of Holland, the young Coburger did not forget.

He returned to Germany, and on his brother's behalf arranged a satisfactory exchange of certain territories with Bavaria. The increasing tension between the courts of Paris and St. Petersburg filled the ducal family with gloom and perplexity. The Czar was a long way off, and Germany lay prostrate at the feet of Napoleon. Duke Ernest had a difficult game to play. His sympathies were altogether with

Russia, and, unlike his kinsman, the king of Saxony, he secretly chafed under a foreign yoke. The German people had awakened to a consciousness of their nationality; their petty political and religious divisions were forgotten; all were for the fatherland. Their rulers for the most part feared this new spirit, or were prepared to exploit it for their own ends. Each thought more of his own state than of Germany. Perhaps the only true patriot among them was Louis, the crown prince of Bavaria; but the Coburg princes, Leopold most of all, at least ardently desired the expulsion of the stranger.

When Napoleon, on the eve of his campaign against Russia, summoned the German sovereigns to meet him at Dresden, Ernest dared not disobey; but his brother slipped off quietly to Vienna, then travelled to Italy, and returned home through Switzerland. At home he found both Ernest and Ferdinand, and his eldest and youngest sisters. All Germany was waiting tensely for news from Russia, where German soldiers were battling for a cause they hoped was lost. At last in December came tidings of the utter overthrow of the Grand Army. The country quivered with eagerness. The duke of Coburg, still in dread of the French, went secretly to Berlin, and tried to rouse Frederick William from his despondency. Ferdinand posted off to Austria, and Leopold to Munich to confer with the crown prince. Louis, poetical, enthusiastic, theatrical, made a striking contrast with the calm, correct, courtier-like Coburger; yet the two were fast friends. News presently came that the king of Prussia had been persuaded by Ernest, and other bold counsellors, to seek refuge among

his own troops at Breslau. All felt that the hour to strike was at hand. Louis was sternly held back by his father ; but probably at his instigation, Leopold visited Frederick William in Silesia, and then presented himself at the Russian headquarters at Kalisz—being the first German prince to draw the sword in the war of liberation.

By the Czar he was welcomed with open arms. His former rank of major-general was restored to him, and he was attached to Constantine's staff. He fought on May 2 at Lutzen, and after the action at Bautzen, covered the retreat into Silesia. Then followed the armistice, to which Napoleon so unwisely consented. Both sides hoped to gain the support of Austria. While that power hung back, Ferdinand of Coburg, unable to curb his impatience, joined the allies under the style of the Count of Sorbenburg. Leopold neglected no means to cement his relations with the imperial family of Russia, and arranged a meeting while the armistice continued, at Blasdorf in Silesia between the Czar and his recalcitrant sister-in-law, Juliana. That princess was not persuaded to return to the conjugal roof, but Alexander made himself mighty affable and free at this interview.

Leopold next ran over into Bohemia, to watch the progress of the peace negotiations and possibly to keep himself well before the notice of the assembled sovereigns and diplomatists. There he met Metternich, Gentz, Humboldt, and the leading statesmen of Europe. He was, he tells us, the only visitor admitted to see the Emperor Francis. On August 12, Austria declared war against Napoleon, and ten days later the allied army crossed the Bohemian frontier

into Saxony. During the battle of Dresden, Leopold with his cavalry was detached to help the rearguard at Königstein, and successfully withstood the attack of General Vandamme. The next day the French took Pirna, but he prevented them issuing from the town. That night, through drenching showers of rain, the allies fell back on the Bohemian mountains. Leopold covered the retreat of Count Ostermann's corps, which probably owed its preservation to his gallantry and to his personal knowledge of the difficult country. At Peterswalde and Priesten he held the foe at bay, narrowly escaping capture. On the 30th, Vandamme, having adventured too far, was caught between the allied forces at Kulm, and after a desperate battle compelled to capitulate. The Coburg prince was decorated on the field with the Russian Order of St. George and later on with the Iron Cross of Prussia and the Austrian Order of Maria Theresa.

Leopold charged at the head of his cavalry at the battle of the nations, and was among those who followed the retreating enemy as far as Erfurt. He took advantage of the lull in hostilities to go with Constantine to Coburg, where there was a great family gathering. Duke Ernest, now sure of Napoleon's defeat, entered into an alliance with the allied sovereigns, and hastened to pay his respects to them at Frankfort. He was given the command of the force besieging the French garrison of Mayence. Leopold and Constantine, accompanying the main army to Bâle, paid a flying visit to the grandduchess Juliana, at Elfenau at Berne. It was in vain: not even the halo of victory could blind the princess to her husband's imperfections or lure her back into

his arms. Leopold, by the way, is said to have been initiated as a mason, on this occasion, at the lodge of Berne, probably at the instance of Constantine, who already belonged to the order. No man could foretell what would result from the overthrow of the French empire, or what new forces would be let loose; and the prince, it may be suspected, was anxious to conciliate all those who might be pulling unseen wires.

The hosts of northern and despotic Europe rolled slowly but irresistibly towards Paris. The bright flame of liberty no longer blazed on the altar of France, to terrify the invader and to inspire the defence. Napoleon had crushed the only force which could have saved him. On March 31, 1814, the allied armies entered the French capital. There Leopold was presently joined by his brothers and by Mensdorff-Pouilly. He was well to the fore in all the celebrations that followed; when, it is said, the allies spent in pleasure and dissipation far more than France paid them by way of indemnity. Louis XVIII. was most gracious to the Coburg princes. "The members of the house of Saxony," declared his majesty, "I count among my next-of-kin."

Leopold, in a letter to his uncle, predicted that France would be engulfed in a civil war. He pitied the poor Bourbons, and added that a few heads falling would help to maintain them on their throne. This bloodthirsty opinion was probably inserted to please the ferocious slayer of infidels. It sounds inconsistent with the writer's character, though it is possible that he may have been temporarily brutalised, as often happens, by his recent experience of war.

With all his affected concern for the Bourbons, he displayed the most friendly interest in his former benefactress, Queen Hortense. He dissuaded her from wasting her devotion on the empress Marie Louise and vigorously seconded his imperial patron's efforts on her behalf. In the end these were so far successful that she was invested with the dukedom of St. Leu, attached to which was a revenue of 400,000 livres a year.

Deliberately or unwittingly, Leopold had by this time endeared himself to the Russian imperial house. "As the emperor," he informs field-marshal Frederick on June 22, "has had the kindness to allow me to follow him to England, I shall seize this favourable opportunity of seeing that interesting country, which ought at this moment to present a very brilliant appearance, owing to the many celebrations which are to take place." No doubt the Czar had hinted that it was also an excellent moment for a brilliant young prince to make his bow to the great European family party.



PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AUGUSTA.

77 1380
77 1380

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

IT was a sadly distracted household to which the allied sovereigns were bidden in the summer of 1814 to celebrate their triumph. The court of St. James did not then exhibit those domestic virtues which in a later age are said to have made it so dull. King George III. had at last been recognised as insane even by English law and public opinion, and the reins of government were held by his hardly more capable and far less reputable son. From his legal or constitutional wife, the unhappy Caroline of Brunswick, the prince regent had been separated for eighteen years past.

Charlotte, the only child of this wretched alliance, had been born only a few months before its final rupture. Her life, as may be supposed, had been anything but happy. Regarded from her infancy with coldness by her father, she naturally inclined towards her mother, whom in childhood she was allowed to see but two hours a week. In the old king she lost her only protector. Her grandmother and namesake sided with her blackguard son against his wife, and looked with suspicion and disfavour on that wife's daughter. As the girl grew older, her father's dislike ripened into positive aversion. He is said

to have cherished the hope that by means of a second marriage he would some day bar her from succeeding to the throne. In the meantime he tried to keep her in the background as much as possible, fearing that her appearance in public and her well-known sympathy with her mother would heighten the detestation in which he was generally held.

The princess bitterly resented this treatment. She was a stoutly-built girl, with her father's features, and hair and eyebrows almost white; but with her insipid Hanoverian physique she combined a hot, vivacious temperament very rare in those days of woman's subjection. "Understand," said the prince regent to her governess, "that Charlotte must lay aside the idle nonsense of thinking that she has a will of her own; while I live she must be subject to me as she is at present, if she were thirty or forty or even forty-five." The subjection in which princesses are kept probably explains the meanness of most royal stocks—the servile qualities of the mother are transmitted to the sons. Charlotte hotly rebelled. When it was proposed to appoint a new governess for her when she was nearly seventeen, she demanded instead a lady of the bedchamber and the proper establishment of the heiress-presumptive to the crown. Her father came down and bullied her into subjection. He was backed by Eldon, the lord chancellor, one of the worst of the many unjust judges who have sat on the woolsack. However, the prince consented to remove the girl from Windsor, where she was under the eye of her absurd grandmother, and placed her in Warwick House, a mansion immediately adjoining his own. There poor Charlotte

languished, seeing very few friends, and longing for a taste of the gay life which frothed around her prison walls.

Marriage seemed the only escape for her, and to her father the best means of getting rid of her. In the year 1813 the hereditary prince of Orange appeared at the regent's court. He had been educated at Oxford, where, to judge from the style of his correspondence, spelling and English grammar did not form part of the curriculum; and he had proved himself a brave and capable soldier in the Peninsular War. He entered with zest into the amusements considered in those days most proper for English gentlemen; patronised "the fancy," drove coaches, and drank hard. He was not a fool, but like most foreigners anxious to please, he often looked like one. He shook hands on the least provocation, and grinned desperately. This affable Dutchman was selected by the prince regent as a husband for his detested daughter. She was invited to meet him at a very intimate dinner-party at Carlton House. Her father then took her aside and asked if he would do. Poor Charlotte did not think much of him, but to escape from her condition of tutelage, she would just then have been ready to marry the Khan of Tartary. She answered that she liked his manner well enough. Thereupon George called out his Dutch highness, and in his best paternal manner laid the princess's hand in his. The prospective bridegroom expressed his happiness in a paroxysm of smiles. Charlotte wrote, a day or two later, that it all appeared to her like a dream, "I was more agitated," she confessed, "than I can express at the whole proceeding."

She awoke from the dream before it was too late. She learned that she would be expected to live the greater part of her life in Holland, and this seemed too high a price to pay even for her release from parental control. Doubtless the prospect would have been pleasing if she had loved the man, but the most she could do was to try to like him. Partly in the hope of getting out of the entanglement, partly from a real reluctance to leave England, she insisted that she must remain free to continue in her country or to return to it whenever and for as long as she pleased. She had been betrothed in December 1813; the negotiations, or rather wranglings, occupied the next six months. There were violent scenes with the regent, who was more anxious to get his daughter married "than any father she had ever seen"; but in spite of his threats and the persuasions of the duke of York and of Lord Liverpool, the princess stuck to her guns. At the eleventh hour, to her undoubted chagrin, the troublesome Dutchman himself came to her relief and announced his consent to her furthest demands.

Three days before, on June 7, the czar of Russia and the king of Prussia, with their attendant princes and generals arrived in London. Alexander put up at Pulteney's Hotel, in Harley Street, and Leopold was quartered close at hand in rather shabby lodgings in High Street, Marylebone. From all the entertainments given to the allied sovereigns, the princess of Wales was rigorously excluded by her husband. Charlotte, being known to sympathise with her mother, was also kept as far as possible out of sight. Her betrothed was above all anxious to keep on good

terms with the regent, and saw no reason to protest on her behalf. He thus afforded her the excuse she was still seeking. She reproached him with his want of respect to her mother, and having forced a quarrel on him, wrote the same evening (June 16) to inform him that she considered their engagement to be totally and for ever at an end. And so it was, despite the prince's entreaties and the regent's wrathful protests.

Meanwhile, prince Leopold was enjoying the hospitality of the English nation. With the Czar and the King, he lunched at the "Star and Garter" and admired the view from Richmond Hill; he explored the maze at Hampton Court; he fed the deer in Bushy Park; and tasted the City's sacramental soup at the Mansion House. He went to dinners, receptions, and balls; and everywhere his tall, graceful figure and his thoughtful face made a deep impression on the romantically minded ladies of the Court. One evening he happened to be at Carlton House when Charlotte by a rare chance was also present. He was pointed out to her, rightly or wrongly, as the admirer of a lady whom she knew. She looked at him for a moment and remarked that the lady ought to feel flattered. These words were repeated to Leopold, and we can imagine that he pondered deeply over them as he returned to his dingy rooms at Marylebone. Shortly after he heard of the breaking-off of the princess's engagement. He probably asked himself if this could have been on his account. For the youngest brother of a petty German prince, with only £400 a year to his credit, this was a prize worth winning. At all events, he decided

to protract his stay in London, when the allied sovereigns left at the end of June, and he removed to more respectable lodgings in Stratford Place.

As soon as his guests had gone, the prince regent took steps to punish his disobedient daughter. On July 12 he abruptly told her that all her attendants would be dismissed that evening and replaced by others of his own choosing. The instant he had left the house, Charlotte put on her bonnet, rushed into the street, jumped into a cab, and was driven to her mother's house at Connaught Place. The princess of Wales was at Blackheath, and on her return that evening does not seem to have been very delighted to find her daughter awaiting her. The house was presently besieged by emissaries from the prince regent, who had been quickly informed of Charlotte's flight. The duke of York, Lord Brougham, and Eldon, were in turn employed as ambassadors; and yielding at last not to their entreaties but to her mother's wish, the poor girl allowed herself to be taken, at two o'clock in the morning, to Carlton House. Thence she was sent in disgrace, a few days later, to Cranbourn Lodge, in Windsor Forest, where her mother came to bid her a last good-bye before leaving England.

Leopold was no doubt kept well informed of all that passed. His patron's sister, the grandduchess Katharine of Oldenburg,¹ hearing of the slight interest in him expressed by Charlotte, had said what she could to quicken it. He had made friends, meanwhile, with her uncles, the dukes of York and Kent, with

¹ This was the Russian princess whom Napoleon had thought of marrying in 1807.

Wellington and Lord Castlereagh. The ministers were anxious to get the princess married, to put an end to the scandals which had made the court odious to the people. Leopold, unlike the prince of Orange, was free to settle in England. They hinted to the regent that the Coburg prince might prove a good substitute for the Dutchman, adding that such a match would be most acceptable to the Czar, and probably not distasteful to Charlotte herself. George at once became suspicious that it was on Leopold's account that his daughter had thrown over the prince of Orange, but having satisfied himself on this point, he received the new suitor with enthusiasm. Charlotte still remained in disgrace at Cranbourn Lodge, but through her aunt, the duchess of York, she seems to have assured Leopold of her favour. At the end of July he was formally introduced to the family at a state ball at Carlton House, and then set out for Germany, exceedingly well content, and pondering, probably, on the status and dignities of the consort of a queen of England.

No one could have dreamed that his prosperous suit would have far less influence on the destinies of England than the death of his youngest sister's husband, the prince of Leiningen, which occurred about this time. After a visit to the widow at Amorbach, and to his mother at Coburg, Leopold and his brothers went to Vienna to attend the Congress. They lustily defended the king of Saxony against the vengeful projects of Prussia, and that power promptly opposed any scheme for the extension of the duke's territory. Ernest, as usual, proved himself a bad diplomatist. He offended the Czar, and Leopold

had to assume exclusive control of the negotiations. At the last moment he was informed by the Chevalier de Gentz that the Prussians had kept all mention of Coburg out of the treaty to be signed the next day. He at once solicited the good offices of the Russian and Austrian delegates, and so secured the inclusion of the article, which secured a considerable addition of territory to the duchy. "From that moment," says the prince, "the Prussians showed the utmost hostility to Coburg, and never executed the part of the engagement by which they were bound to exchange the territories which had been assigned to Coburg on the Rhine,¹ against some detached territories in Saxony which were most desirable for Coburg."

All the German princes were bent on well feathering their own nests. In the outcome of the war of liberation they saw only chances of their personal aggrandisement. Even the duke's son and successor admits that none entertained a thought or a dream in any way resembling that which took shape in his time in the consolidation of Germany. The German people who had been the first to rise against the invader were transferred from ruler to ruler without their leave being asked. They were simply the livestock that went with the estate. The only service rendered by the congress to humanity was its denunciation of the slave trade.

In spite of his diplomatic successes, Leopold's abilities as a statesman were not suspected by any one at this time. The comte de la Garde Chambonas, a French royalist who saw him at Vienna, remarks

¹ Or rather on the Nahe. The principality of Lichtenberg, near St. Wendel, seems to be referred to.

that he seemed as unassuming as he was handsome, adding that never was high birth better revealed than in his distinguished air and easy manner. In all the festivities which enlivened the negotiations, he took a leading part. His good looks designated him for the part of Jupiter in a tableau representing Olympus—an assembly which the congress was supposed to recall; and in a grand tournament organised at the Hofburg he was one of the most admired of the twenty-four paladins or champions. But he did not allow diplomacy or gaiety to divert his ambition. He cultivated the society of Wellington and Castlereagh, who attended the conference on behalf of England, and he did not let them forget his interest in the princess Charlotte.

Emulous of his example, his brother Ferdinand, who was now thirty years old, had entered the lists as a suitor for the charming Countess Antonia Marie Gabrielle Kohary, then in her nineteenth year. Her sister-in-law¹ has given us her portrait: "She is very tall, of fine proportions, but a little too thin; wonderful black eyes, long fair hair, a beautiful nose, and the prettiest mouth I know of." She was the only child and the heiress-presumptive of Prince Kohary, chancellor of Hungary, and one of the richest and most powerful magnates of that kingdom.

The wooing was interrupted by another call to arms. Napoleon had swooped down once more on France, and the Bourbons with shrill cries scuttled off into Belgium. Ferdinand marched with the Austrians a second time to Paris, and by his generosity and courtesy gained the good opinion of the French

Louise, duchess of Saxe-Coburg.

people. He was promoted to the rank of field-marshal-lieutenant, and won the hand of the fair Hungarian. They were married on January 2, 1816, in the cathedral of St. Stephen at Vienna, in the presence of Duke Ernest and other exalted personages. Ferdinand would not adjure the evangelical faith, but it was stipulated that the children of the marriage should be brought up in the catholic religion. They were thus rendered ineligible for the succession to the dukedom of Coburg, exchanging it, as it proved, for a far more brilliant destiny.

Leopold also went to Paris to assist at the second restoration of the Bourbon king. He found himself treated with special consideration by the English. Rumours had got abroad that he was to be the husband of their princess, though others had coupled her name with the brother of the man she had thrown over. She herself remained in total ignorance of the fate reserved to her, as she confessed to a friend in a letter dated September 15, 1815. By means of an officer devoted to the duke of Kent, Leopold was able to communicate with her. She at once urged him to come over and deliver her from her wearisome bondage. He preferred to wait. He knew that her father was still incensed against her, and was capable of rejecting his proposal simply to spite her. So, submitting to her reproaches, he went off to Berlin at the new year, to attend to business connected with the duchy.

The result justified his caution. The regent's wrath cooled down, and now his wife had left England, he had no objection to his daughter's remaining in the country. Leopold was accordingly invited to

London. Unluckily he had to await the return of his eldest brother from the wedding at Vienna, and was then confined to his bed by a severe cold. At the end of February he reached London. He had a talk with Castlereagh, and they posted down to Brighton. Though George was suffering from gout, he received them affably. The prince made his proposal for the princess's hand and was formally accepted. Presently Charlotte herself arrived at the Pavilion, accompanied by her grandmother and her elderly aunts. She reproached Leopold rather warmly for his apparent submissiveness to her father, but to her he must have appeared as a deliverer and the contract of marriage as a charter of emancipation. When this had been signed and sealed, she was sent back to Cranbourn Lodge. Her affianced husband remained at Brighton, but he contrived to meet her at Windsor, and once visited her at the lodge, thereby shocking the regent's nice sense of propriety.

Meanwhile, a bill was passed through Parliament, making Leopold a British citizen and settling upon him an annual allowance of £50,000. The offer of an English peerage he declined, but he accepted the title of royal highness and the rank of field-marshal. Both he and his wife were to remain in England. The settlement was a generous one, considering the bankrupt condition of the country, but the marriage was on the whole favourably looked upon by the nation. Not much was known about the bridegroom, but it was something for the English people in those days to have a prince who was not notorious for imbecility or blackguardism. The pair were loudly cheered when they went to be married on May 2, 1816, in

the drawing-room of Carlton House—an inauspicious place enough. Leopold looked very fine in an English uniform, but it was noticed that he uttered the responses in a very low tone. This was probably due to nervousness and to his imperfect knowledge of the English language, but a different construction was placed upon it by slanderous tongues. By a journalist's blunder, his name, instead of his brother's had been given in a German paper as that of the bridegroom of Countess Kohary, four months before. This report was quoted by Lady Hamilton in her secret history of the court of George IV. as a proof of Leopold's infamy. The confusion of the brothers and the representation of the chancellor of Hungary's wealthy daughter as a maid beguiled and forsaken, is sufficiently diverting.

Then followed the happiest months in Charlotte's few and Leopold's many years. They learned to love each other in marriage. The girl poured out on her husband all the stores of affection which had found no outlet or object in her cramped and chilly life. The greatness of her love, said her husband's friend and physician, Stockmar, was to be compared only with that of the national debt. She was warm-hearted and sentimental, and in the handsome, pensive prince with the gold-dust of victory upon him, she found a lover such as she may often have dreamed of. With royal folks, courtship begins, instead of ends, at marriage. Charlotte never tired of telling her friends that she was very, very happy. She was proud of her husband and loved to sign herself, Charlotte of Saxe-Coburg.

Luckily her contentment did not subdue her

natural vivacity—that hoydenishness which continued to shock her ridiculous generation. Standing with her hands behind her back, her chin and bust thrown aggressively forward, she impressed many of her *genteel* visitors as *unladylike*. Yet they liked her. It was rude in a *female* to be human, but much was excused in a princess; and her receptions and dinners at Camelford House and at Claremont were joyous and successful. The duchess of York, the king of Prussia's sister, who had helped to bring about the marriage, was a frequent visitor. The Orleans family also came over from Twickenham. After a life of seclusion, the princess loved to dispense and to receive hospitality. She made herself gracious even to the despicable Eldon. The English people felt kindly towards the princess who, it was rumoured, would shortly be the mother of a future king of England.

But the halcyons were but hovering for a while over Charlotte's head. The day she dreaded and hoped for came at last. On November 5, 1817, the wished-for child was born dead; five hours later, the mother breathed her last sigh in the twenty-second year of her age and the nineteenth month of her wifehood. Whom the gods love die young.

Leopold, "the husband of a year, the father of the dead," staggered before this double thrust. His love and his ambition were buried in the same grave. Nearly half a century after, at an age when kings have forgotten the sweetness of love, he declared that he had never recovered the feeling of happiness which had blessed his brief married life.

CHAPTER IV

LEOPOLD AND THE CROWN OF GREECE

WITH the death of his wife, Leopold's career in England must have seemed to be for ever closed. There was no other princess that he could marry, there was no love lost between him and his dead bride's father. There was little to attract any one in the country itself. Distress was general and acute, discontent was rife, industry depressed, only the hangman's trade flourished. England, thanks to its strenuous efforts to revive the dark ages on the continent, was the most wretched and worst governed state in Europe. It is not to be wondered at that the German prince, in the hour of his desolation, should have proposed to return at once to his kinsfolk in happier Thuringia.

He was dissuaded by his confidant, Stockmar. The time of mourning, argued the physician, should be spent where the whole nation spontaneously mourned with him. "Here it was fitting for the prince to erect a worthy monument to the dead by showing how nobly a man could bear an incredible misfortune, caused by no fault of his own. Were he not to do so, it would be looked upon in England as ingratitude and a want of right feeling, and the prince would thus weaken and disturb his whole position here."

Another of the prince's countrymen¹ wrote at the time: "He stands out in noble outline before the nation. If he does nothing in the opinion of the public to break his association with their loved princess, and remains conspicuously the noble man of blameless life, I believe that further events may make his career a very remarkable one." Leopold was thus reminded that the nation's universal sympathy for him might yet turn to his profit. Moreover, he owed his independence to the magnificent stipend settled upon him by Parliament. To surrender this would have been to disconcert every noble parasite in Europe, and to spend it abroad would have been to jeopardise its continuance. At the English court, finally, his highness would remain in the full limelight of European diplomacy and politics.

Stockmar, who took this practical view of his patron's tragic situation, was at this time thirty years of age. He had become known to Leopold while serving as a surgeon in the war of liberation. He was a remarkable man chiefly because he was in the confidence of many remarkable people. These formed very various estimates of his character; which it is perhaps too early yet to forget, and to come, historian-like, to an independent conclusion of our own. He seems to have had all the moral qualities which fitted the Mentor of princes—he was outspoken, fearless, absolutely disinterested, and anxious to do what was right.

Charlotte, like her posthumous cousin, Queen Victoria, was very fond of "Stocky." But his influence over the Coburg princes was due a great deal

¹ Varnhagen.

more to his integrity than to his wisdom. This was, in fact, not by any means as profound as he imagined. He was confident that he was right, whereas in political matters he was nearly always demonstrably wrong. His opinions were the result of study and reasoning, not of experience, and if they proved fallacious, it was experience that he blamed. He was, in short, a doctrinaire with an immense belief in the mission and usefulness of kings. For people who did not agree with him, he had a good-humoured contempt. He undoubtedly exaggerated his influence in European affairs, and believed himself to be the fifth wheel of the coach of society. Some one said he was, rather, the fly on the wheel ; I should say that, like a statesman of our own day, he was a drag upon it. Duke Ernest II. tells us that his ideas were chiefly derived from a *coterie* of very superior persons, to whom he looked up with reverence, but who were certainly not forces in the management of Europe. Stockmar, says his highness, was a political dilettante ; he was "a faithful companion, like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, but he could never have been a responsible servant ready to answer for his master's deeds or to wage open war for his own ideas."

The advice he gave the widowed Leopold was at all events sound. The prince remained in England, living for the greater part of the year following Charlotte's death, in close retirement. He was, none the less, observant of the reshuffling of the cards consequent on the failure of the direct succession. The prince regent's brothers now all hastened to take unto themselves constitutional wives, and to pull themselves together, as became heirs to the throne.



BARON STOCKMAR.

After Winterhalter.

That in order to do so, they broke ties which nature and honour had consecrated, was of course esteemed no discredit by a people which has never known any other morality than a notary's.¹ With Edward, duke of Kent, the old king's fourth son, Leopold, we know, had long been on friendly terms. There had been some talk of a match between him and the prince's widowed sister, Victoria of Leiningen. The project had been warmly approved by Charlotte, whose favourite uncle the duke had been; and in it her husband must now have seen a possibility of recovering his foothold in England. It was probably at his suggestion that the scheme was revived.

The duke was now fifty-one years old, a tall, fat man, very like his father, very bald, talkative, and pleasant. He had, notwithstanding, earned in military circles the reputation of a martinet, but it is to his credit that he advocated the abolition of flogging in the army. People were growing a little sick of brutality, and civilised instincts were not then branded as sentimentality. His royal highness fancied himself a liberal, and was on the whole better liked than the other elderly scamps of his family. He was treated very badly by the regent, and was desperately poor. He was spitefully thwarted by the tory ministry in an ingenious scheme to sell his property by public lottery. However, as he stood so near the throne, Victoria of Leiningen thought fit to accept him. She was at this time a bouncing, fresh-coloured woman of thirty-two, fond of dress and generally attractive. The marriage was solemnised at Coburg on May 29,

¹ In justice to William and Edward, it ought to be said that they were very reluctant to part from their unofficial wives.

1818, and repeated at Kew in the following July. After a stay at Claremont, the pair returned for economy's sake to the bride's old home at Amorbach in Leiningen.

When, some months later, there was promise of a child, the duke, remembering his father's famous utterance, determined that the heir to the throne of Britain should be born a Briton. With considerable difficulty, he borrowed enough money for the journey, and on May 24, 1819, a daughter was born to him at Kensington Palace. She was named Alexandrina, after the Czar, and Victoria after her mother, and she became in due course sovereign of these realms and the dependencies thereof. Her father made sure that he would become king of England. "My brothers," he said, "are not so strong as I. I have lived a regular life and shall outlive them all. The crown will come to me and to my children." Part only of the prophecy was fulfilled. A regular life does not guarantee longevity. The winter of 1819 was exceptionally severe, even for England. To escape its rigours, the duke with his wife and child went to Sidmouth. There, to the surprise of the whole nation, he died of a chill caught in Salisbury Cathedral, on January 23, 1820. He left his widow almost without means, and well it was for her and the baby Victoria that Leopold was at hand to take charge of them and to offer them the shelter of his home at Claremont.

The old king outlived his more vigorous son six days, and as none of his surviving sons, all men of advanced years, had heirs, his highness of Coburg was looked upon as the uncle and probable regent of

the future queen of England. In a tentative, unostentatious way, he courted popularity, and a large measure of this he earned, not so much by his own qualities as because of the contempt in which the princes of the reigning house were held. He was known to lead a decent, sober life; he was neither rake nor gamester, and he won the respect of a domestic people by his genuine sorrow for his dead wife. Perhaps on account of these very qualities he was disliked intensely by that wife's father, who sneeringly called him the Marquis Peu-à-peu, and this dislike was shared by the court circle. Greville describes him as dull and heavy and oppressed by the weight of his own dignity. "This prince will never succeed in this country," prophesied the diarist. Fitzclarence, William IV.'s son, told Creevey that he considered Leopold a damned humbug—an expression which, in a milder form, Leopold afterwards applied to the British nation. Mrs. Pickering, a friendly witness, tells us that the prince, though perfectly friendly and polite, never unbent and that one never seemed to get any farther with him.

But his manner was not observed by the people generally, to prejudice whom stories were industriously spread of his stinginess and rapacity. These stories, the prince himself says, were probably founded on the indiscreet economies of Baron Hardenbroek, his master of the household; they conflict somewhat with the volume of debt accumulated by his highness during his stay in England. Strangely enough, they did him more harm in the eyes of the nation than the indisputable fact that he was drawing fifty thousand pounds a year for doing absolutely

nothing, from a country in the last throes of misery and discontent.

George IV., upon his accession, forbade the church of England to pray for his wife, and erased her name from the liturgy. That the church founded by Henry VIII. should humour the malice of another crowned debauchee, was to be expected ; that men of sense should have gravely discussed the guilt of Caroline of Brunswick in relation to her official husband, seems absurd. Disregarding the fact that George was really the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert, any sane person must admit that his conduct had released Caroline from any further obligations towards him. Yet the fat dandy had the effrontery to institute proceedings for divorce against her. Leopold's position at once became unpleasant and difficult. Charlotte had always stood by her mother, and through her he had become friendly with the Whig leaders. Besides, the queen's was the popular side.

The regent made efforts to win over his son-in-law, or, at any rate, to get him to leave the country. The prince stood aloof from both parties for a while ; and in order, as he says, not to prejudice the case, waited till the evidence was closed. Then he paid a visit to the queen, at Brandenburgh House. "She received him," he tells us, "kindly ; looked very strange and said some strange things. The country was in a state of incredible excitement, and this visit was a great card for the queen." It was also a good card for his highness and endeared him to the people. "It had," he continues, "an effect on the lords which it ought not to have had, as it could not change the evidence." No ; but by visiting an

accused person when all the evidence against him has been heard, you imply that you don't believe it. Leopold candidly admits that he thought the king was rather badly treated in this affair; so it is evident that his action was the result, to some extent, of calculated policy.

The injured and ill-treated monarch was making love to Lady Conyngham when the ministry decided to drop the indictment against his consort. He was furious, not the least against his dead daughter's husband, whom he vowed he would never see again. It was probably on the occasion described by Creevey that he formally signified his displeasure. Under date January 27, 1821, the lively diarist writes: "At the levee last Friday, the king turned his back upon Prince Leopold in the most pointed manner; upon which the said Leopold, without any alteration on a muscle of his face, walked up to the duke of York, and in hearing of every one near him said, 'The king has thought proper at last to take his line and I shall take mine,' and so, with becoming German dignity, marched out of the house." The duke of York, however, patched up a peace, and George, unable to restrain his curiosity, questioned Leopold about the queen—as to how she was dressed and a thousand trifling details.

Not long after, the prince, to his deep disgust, discovered that the king had given Lady Conyngham some of his Charlotte's jewels. He attended his odious father-in-law's coronation, notwithstanding, and was loudly cheered by the crowd. At such moments not impossibly he may have wondered whether a revolution might not call him to take a hand in politics like that played by Louis Philip of

Orleans ten years later. But the plot to murder the ministers most unfortunately failed; the Issachar of nations bowed its back once more beneath the burden; and the king displayed every intention of going on living and reigning and keeping little Victoria off the throne.

Having no part, for the present, to play in England, Leopold during the 'twenties spent a great deal of time in travelling and renewing his relations with foreign courts. He complains of the enmity of Lord Londonderry, who, to please George IV., endeavoured to poison the minds of the Austrian cabinet against him. However, the duke of Wellington put matters right. When in England, he spent much of his time with his sister and her family—a period which Queen Victoria declared to have been the happiest of her childhood. Then was laid the foundation of that warm affection which ever afterwards united uncle and niece. Leopold allowed the duchess of Kent £3,000 a year, in addition to the £6,000 lately settled on her by parliament—not a very liberal allowance when we consider the magnitude of his own.

Though described by a tory reviewer as “respectable—highly respectable,” but with nothing romantic, much less heroic, in his composition, he occupied his leisure largely by reading romances. Having a bad cold, one Saturday evening he made Sir Robert Gardiner sit up till one o'clock in the morning reading to him Scott's lately published novel, “Ivanhoe,” and then fell to championing the cause of the Saxons with the fervour of a contemporary.¹

Waiting for dead men's shoes is certainly a wearisome business, and the only prospect of advancement

¹ “Letters of Lady Louisa Stuart.”

for Leopold in this country lay in the possibility of the early deaths of George IV. and his brother William, and of his assumption of the regency during the minority of his niece. From his speculations on these remote contingencies he was roused by a call from an unexpected quarter. He had dreamed of becoming the power behind the throne; he was now offered a crown himself. Since Napoleon's downfall such a prize had seemed beyond the grasp of the most hopeful adventurer. The kingdoms had been allotted finally, as it seemed, by a concert of powers pledged to resist any attempt at redistribution, or any intrusion into the circle of crowned heads. But the lightning that cometh out of the east had kindled into life a long-dead nation.

In 1821 the Greek people had risen against their Turkish oppressors, and ever since, with varying fortunes, had maintained a desperate struggle for existence. While every generous heart in Europe beat in sympathy with the Hellenes, the spiders who spun webs in the chanceries looked coldly on. Metternich, the minister of a power that has never done a good thing, wished to let the insurrection burn itself out beyond the pale of civilisation. It was slow to do so. Russia at last was stirred on behalf of a people oppressed by her traditional foe, and France and England, jealous of her influence in Eastern affairs, were forced to consider the possibility of intervention.

Their help was now sorely needed by the Greeks. An Egyptian army had landed in the Peloponnesus and threatened the whole nation with extinction. Stifling the republican instinct of their race, the insurgent leaders resolved to disarm the suspicions of the great monarchies, and to enlist their sympathies

by submitting themselves to a king of some reigning princely house. Russia and England were the powers which it was most needful to conciliate ; they would choose a ruler acceptable to both. In the year 1825 accordingly, before the English government had settled with Russia the basis of their common action, two Greeks, Louriotis and Orlandos of Hydra by name, appeared in London, and startled Leopold of Saxe-Coburg by offering him the crown of their country.

The prince was delighted as well as surprised. "The ideal halo which then surrounded Greece in the eyes of the world" did not fail, says Stockmar, to impress him ; "calling strongly into play a certain vein of fancy and romance which existed in his character." Even the unfriendly critic just quoted was able to conceive that "the singular concurrence of circumstances which combined to make his position in this country one of almost overpowering ennui, would also make him fancy himself ready to exchange it for any prospect (while that prospect was distant) of manly enterprise and generous endeavour."¹ The prince, however, seems to have referred the envoys to Canning, who now directed the foreign policy of England, and who had some talk with them about the state of affairs in Greece. He formed no very favourable opinion of Leopold's prospects, and advised him to dismiss the matter from his mind, adding that he could be much more useful in London.

It is plain from what followed that his highness did not give the envoys an unconditional refusal. From this moment he watched the progress of events in the Levant with the keenest interest. Possibly the visit of the two Greeks and their proposal had

¹ *Quarterly Review*, October 1830.

some little influence on the English cabinet. Before the end of the year, Lieven, the Russian ambassador, reported that Canning and he were likely to reach an understanding; and on April 4, 1826, the formation of an independent Greece was practically guaranteed by the protocol of St. Petersburg. Then came a long period of negotiation, during which the prince wandered restlessly about from London to Coburg, and Coburg down to Italy.

In March the Greeks elected as the head of their provisional government a statesman whom he had known during the war of liberation. This was John Kapodistrias, a Corfiote, who had entered the Russian service and been entrusted by Alexander I. with the management of foreign affairs. Soon after his patron's death and the accession of Nicholas I., he had returned to assist his native country in her struggle for freedom. That struggle was practically ended by the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Navarino on October 20, 1827.

Leopold was probably as much interested as any man in Europe by the news of this "untoward event." Possibly with a view to sounding the French court as to his candidature, he went to Paris, where, he remarks, Charles X. received him most kindly. Some of the Legitimists suggested a match between him and the widowed duchesse de Berry, mother of the heir to the throne of France. The proposal that their future king's mother should wed a man who had so often borne arms against France was disgraceful to those who made it. But "Prince Leopold felt no partiality for their plans"—which indeed would have secured to him a position no better than he was

promised in England and very much inferior to that offered him in Greece. From Paris he travelled into Silesia to meet king Frederick William, and "the best friend he had ever had, Prince William of Prussia, the king's youngest brother." The crown prince arranged a visit with him to Naples. There they arrived in November, and there Leopold remained during the winter, keeping an observant eye on all that passed in the Levant.

The Russians were now at war with Turkey, and England wanted to wind up the Greek question before they were in a position to dictate terms. The representatives of the three powers met accordingly at Poros, an island off the coast of Argolis, and drew up a protocol recommending that Greece south of the gulfs of Volo and Arta should be constituted a tributary state of the Ottoman Empire under a single hereditary prince to be chosen by the powers. The diplomatists were good enough to ask Kapodistrias if he wished to suggest any one for that office, and like the delegates, three years before, he mentioned his old acquaintance, Leopold.

I see no reason to doubt his sincerity. He knew that the prince would be acceptable to France and Russia, and presumably to England also, and hoped that he would be able to obtain more favourable terms for Greece. He was disappointed. Whether Leopold was kept in ignorance of his nomination or whether he did not wish to jeopardise his candidature by asking too much, he seems to have done nothing else but canvass the courts on his own behalf; and on March 22, 1829, the powers signed another protocol at London, almost identical with that of Poros,

drafted the December previous, and reaffirming the suzerainty of the sultan.

This treaty was not presented to the Greek president at Aigina till May 14. He read its contents with indignation and surprise. During the past six months Greece had greatly strengthened her position, thanks to her own victories in Akarnania and the Turkish reverses in the Balkans. The country was not disposed to remain in a state of vassalage. At this inopportune moment Leopold decided to act. He chose as his envoy Charles Stockmar, the physician's brother, who arrived at Aigina only eight days after the presentation of the protocol. He handed the president an ambiguous letter from his highness, who, he went on to say, was willing to accept the crown of Greece, provided that country was protected by a good frontier and that there was some prospect of raising the people from their debased condition. The ambassadors he had seen at Naples were all most favourable to the prince's candidature, but he could do nothing more till the Greeks formally demanded him as their ruler. "If the powers," concluded Stockmar, "then call upon the prince for his decision, he will naturally state the conditions on which he will accept the throne: these he will make in the interest of Greece, and he doubts not that he will be able to reconcile the divergent opinions of the three powers."

Kapodistrias, with the shrewdness of his race, at once perceived in this proposal the possibility of a good bargain for his country. Leopold, he assured Stockmar, was the prince he had himself, "to the surprise of the ambassadors," in the first instance suggested; but alas! in the protocol with which he

had lately been presented, the three powers reserved to themselves absolutely the right to select a sovereign for Greece. No voice was left to the nation either as to her ruler or to the settlement of her boundaries. If, of course, the prince could use his influence to obtain for them the islands of Krete and Samos, no doubt the Greeks would be willing in return to submit themselves to a king approved by the powers. It might seem to Stockmar that no harm could come of the expression of Greece's preference for his royal highness, and that without such an expression he could do nothing to help her—well, the president thought otherwise. He did not wish to provoke the powers, but he would not submit to the protocol. And he bowed Stockmar out with what seems to me the broadest possible hint that Leopold would get no invitation from Greece till he was able to promise the coveted islands as part of his dowry. The envoy's brother accuses Kapodistrias of bad faith in this business. To me it seems that he acted in the best interests of his country. The Greeks were not really eager to have a king at all; Leopold had so far shown no capacity for kingship; and it was only fair and reasonable that he should offer the young nation substantial advantages if he was to be preferred to the other candidates.

These, to the surprise of old-fashioned and dignified diplomatists, were already numerous. The high-born princes of Europe did not disdain "the pinchbeck crown of an insurgent state." Leopold, however, held his own, and soon secured the support of Russia and France. It was from the king of England that the most serious opposition came. George's dislike

of his ex-son-in-law had nowise abated, and he had fallen, moreover, a great deal under the influence of the duke of Cumberland, who recommended his wife's brother, duke Charles of Mecklenburg, for the vacant throne. The duke of Wellington, on the other hand, had favoured the pretensions of Leopold's old rival, the prince of Orange, but he was objected to by France. It is strange that the candidates were without exception of northern or Teutonic blood, though for the throne of Greece a southern or Slavonic prince would have seemed for many reasons the most eligible.

In January 1830 the English cabinet at last adopted Leopold's candidature, and forced King George, under a threat of resignation, to accept it also. "This was most unfortunate for Greek affairs, as it rendered it impossible for Prince Leopold to press upon a cabinet that staked its existence on the question, those measures which many sensible people in England thought necessary for the existence of Greece."

So wrote the candidate himself in after years. Nevertheless, at the instigation probably of Kapodistrias, he told Lord Aberdeen, even before the crown had been officially offered to him, that he would refuse it unless it was accompanied with the cession of Krete. The statesman replied very curtly that there had never hitherto been any question of that island, and that its exclusion could not afford a pretext for the prince's withdrawal. "The powers," he added, "have no intention whatever of negotiating with your royal highness. They expect a simple acceptance of their proposal, and would consider a conditional acceptance as a virtual refusal."

Stockmar very sensibly remarks that the prince ought to have said that he was free to frame his reply as he pleased, and that the powers could put any construction they liked upon it. But he was eager for the crown, and seems to have made up his mind to take it at all costs. He remembered the Greek president's thinly veiled warning, not to go to Greece empty-handed, and he relied a good deal on the opposition party to help him to get better terms. The dislike in which he was held by the king and Cumberland had drawn him closer to the whig leaders. He was known to consult Lord Durham in particular on all points of importance, and this intimacy of course excited the distrust and animosity of the Tories.

That party had already given proof of that unaccountable ill-will towards Greece and fondness for the Turks by which it has ever since been distinguished. Mainly owing to the difficulties raised by the British government, the negotiations had dragged on for over eight years. On February 3, 1830, a fresh protocol was signed in the hope of satisfying the Greeks. They were freed from the suzerainty of the sultan, but England insisted upon the retrocession of Akarnania to their beloved Musulmans. This would have given the new state a hardly defensible frontier. At the same time the crown was formally offered by the three signatory powers to Leopold. Torn between his ambition and the necessity of humouring his prospective subjects, the prince pursued from this moment the most vacillating course.

On the 11th he wrote to Lord Aberdeen, accepting the offer of the powers, provided that the people

of Samos and Krete were protected against the reprisals of their late rulers, that Greece should be given a stronger frontier, that it should be allowed to object to his appointment, that the powers should guarantee the stability of his throne, and that they should supply him with money and troops. Here was the conditional acceptance which Lord Aberdeen had threatened to treat as a refusal. Instead, he persuaded Leopold to withdraw it. His highness then wrote another letter, stipulating only that he should be assisted with money and soldiers. But the powers would not listen to any conditions whatsoever, and this letter was also withdrawn.

This was on the 16th. A week later, at Aberdeen's suggestion, he rewrote and presented his letter of the 11th, making the conditions now appear as simple observations or recommendations. Presumably, he must have been led to suppose that these would receive consideration, or he would not have thought it worth while to repeat them in any form at all. This letter was treated by the plenipotentiaries as a formal acceptance, and was embodied in the protocol. Stockmar wrote off to his wife: "The prince really goes to Greece," and his highness was congratulated on his appointment. "The choice of your royal highness," wrote Stein, "has answered the wishes of all the friends of Greece."

That it would answer to the wishes of the Greeks themselves, Leopold doubted. He sent an apologetic letter to Kapodistrias, saying that he had only waived the conditions for fear of protracting the present ambiguous state of the country. He knew very well that the Greeks wanted his dowry, not him.

He again approached the English minister, saying that though he had from motives of courtesy accepted the crown without formal conditions, his consent was only to be understood according to the tenor and spirit of the original note of February 11, and any departure therefrom would release him from his promise. The new kingdom, he insisted, must have a better frontier to the north.

If he supposed that the powers were ready to grant as a favour what they had refused as a condition, he was mistaken. His lordship answered that there could be no appeal from a letter signed and annexed to the protocol to one which had been previously withdrawn. It was the deliberate aim of Aberdeen and Wellington to leave Greece at the mercy of Turkey (a policy not unheard of in our own day); hence their obstinacy with regard to the northern frontier, a point which Russia and France were willing enough to concede. The same hostility pursued Leopold when he asked the powers to guarantee a loan of sixty millions of francs. England would grant only twelve and a half millions. The prince threatened to withdraw altogether if the loan were refused, for without it the government of Greece could not be carried on.

Leaving Stockmar to represent him in London, he went over to Paris at the beginning of April, to talk matters over with the French cabinet. Prince Lieven, the Russian ambassador, says that he sought also, but unsuccessfully, to obtain the hand of an Orleans princess, and complained bitterly to Stein of the mistaken policy, and the vain and obstinate men with whom he had to deal. At the end of April the news of the serious illness of the English king brought



THE DUCHESS OF KENT.

him back to London. There he learnt that the powers had consented to guarantee the loan to the amount he had demanded.

But almost immediately after came a sheaf of letters, newspapers, documents, and reports from Greece. On reading them, he found his gloomiest forebodings realised. The people were furious, and rejected the February protocol. They demanded a voice in the selection of their own ruler and clamoured for a strong natural frontier. Kapodistrias and the senate were prepared to accept and to welcome the sovereign imposed by the powers, but they admitted that he would be faced by insurmountable difficulties. The prince ought also to adopt the orthodox faith. Greece, they assured him, was reduced to her last shilling : poverty, privation, misery, despair, awaited him on his arrival.

This picture was by no means overdrawn, though the Greek president, who had no more use for Leopold, was certainly anxious to discourage him. In another letter he invited his highness to throw himself into the vortex. "The settlement of the boundaries," he wrote, "cannot fail to subject Greece to a severe crisis. Why not seize this first opportunity to give her an earnest of the sacrifices which you are resolved to make for her welfare ? If I have made any progress in the good opinion of the people, it is because they constantly see me sharing their miseries and sufferings. It is during the bivouac, under the wretched shelter of a hut, that they have learnt to know me. It is by this first test that the Greeks will judge you. If you present yourself to them as a great personage, unable to endure their poverty and

privations, you will lose the surest means of making a useful impression upon them. Come then and assist in person at the difficult and painful operation of establishing the boundaries, and do not allow others to undertake it in your place."

The tory reviewer we have quoted pictures his highness in the saloons of Marlborough House or the groves of Claremont, ruminating on the arrangements of his future court or devising some amiable project for the improvement of his prospective subjects, when his reverie is interrupted by the arrival of this dispatch. When the crown of which he had dreamed had actually come and turned out to be but a plain circlet of biting steel—when the time for its wearer to go was actually come—his highness, we are to imagine, recoiled with horror from the prospect. "The effect of the dispatch was galvanic."

Leopold may have been as little of a paladin as this critic suggests and wholly unfitted to heroic emprise; but he would have been an egregious fool to have forced himself on a people that did not want him, and to which, so far, he had no duties whatever. He forwarded the papers he had received to the plenipotentiaries, preparing them for his withdrawal, and asking whether it would be to the general interest, or to the interest of Greece, to carry out the provisions of the protocol without the most drastic alterations and revision. He told them plainly that he did not wish to reign over an unwilling people. The ministers endeavoured in vain to dispel his apprehensions. After further consultation with his Whig advisers, he wrote on May 21 to the conference, formally retracting his consent and declining the proffered crown.

His renunciation brought down on him a storm of abuse and censure. Stein blamed him for taking his hand from the plough like a coward, and predicted that a man of his weak character would never play a bold part in life. Count Matusziewicz spoke as strongly : " He would have carried with him into Greece only disgust, dread, and unceasing regret for having abandoned his pretended claims to the English regency ; such a sovereign would have disgraced royalty." The Russian envoy's explanation of his motives was almost universally accepted. Forgetting Leopold's early hesitation and objections, they saw in the illness of George IV. the immediate cause of his withdrawal. Such a suspicion seems decidedly far-fetched. Between the prince's niece and the succession stood the duke of Clarence, who might very well have been expected to live till the young Victoria was old enough to govern for herself ; as actually did happen. If any regent had been needed, the duchess of Kent would have held the office. Whatever hopes the prince indulged on this score, he would not have allowed to entice him away from a throne of his own.

That Leopold displayed serious irresolution and was technically guilty of inconsistency, cannot be denied ; but he must have been encouraged to believe that his recommendations would be adopted when he was advised by Lord Aberdeen to tack them on to his letter of acceptance. He seems to have been beguiled if not tricked into a hasty consent. He had made it plain from the first that he considered certain conditions absolutely essential to the salvation of Greece ; and two years later the powers, in spite of their

bluster, had to concede every one of them to the new candidate, Otho of Bavaria. Leopold was not, on the one hand, compelled to accept a crown of thorns for the benefit of a people utterly alien to him, or, on the other, to force himself upon them most reluctant, and to risk their ire at the bidding of powers who would not lend a bayonet for his support.

The blame and shame of the whole business belong to the tory cabinet, which wished to ruin the infant state in order to spite Russia. Strange that a party pledged to the defence of the Church as well as the State, should have always so staunchly backed an unchristian power against its christian neighbours; stranger still that this sympathy with Islam is not extended to our fellow-citizens in India and Egypt! Kapodistrias has also been very unfairly blamed. He wanted to make the best possible bargain for Greece, and was quite in the right in discouraging Leopold when he saw that he could do nothing for the country. After his assassination, his wisdom was proved by the terms granted to the Bavarian king.

Leopold's refusal gave the greatest delight to little Victoria, who (as she has since told us) adored her uncle and was distressed at the thought of his departure. The prince, in spite of Otho's unfortunate experiences on the Hellenic throne, often regretted that it had escaped him. It would, he was accustomed to say, have satisfied his romantic cravings much better than did the state he was actually called on to govern. Stockmar did not share his regret. "For the poetry," he wrote, "which Greece would have afforded I am not inclined to give very much. Mortals see only the bad side of the things they have,

and the good side of the things they haven't. That is the whole difference between Greece and Belgium; though I do not mean to say that when the first king of Greece shall, after all manner of toils, have died, his life may not furnish the poet with excellent material for an epic poem."

CHAPTER V

THE BIRTH OF BELGIUM

PRINCE LEOPOLD had not long to wait for another throne. In the east a part of the fabric of old Europe had broken away, and rifts were everywhere showing in the edifice designed by the powers at Vienna fifteen years before. Kingdoms were in the making once more. On no part of their handiwork could the august architects have reposed more confidence than in the kingdom of the Netherlands which they had formed by the union of Holland and the provinces we now call Belgium. The two countries were in many respects the complements of each other. Holland was commercial, Belgium industrial; the Dutch ports afforded an outlet for Belgian produce, the Dutch colonies a market for Belgian manufactures. Placed under the sovereignty of the Dutch king, William, who had formerly been prince of Orange, the two nations formed a state sufficiently important and formidable.

Yet, as an English writer remarks, the sentence of divorce was written in sympathetic ink between the lines of the marriage contract. This was one of those ideal matches arranged by well-meaning friends which contain every element of success except the parties' mutual affection. As the years went by

it became plain that the Dutch and Belgians did not love each other. Half the population of Belgium, it is true, was of the same race and language as the people of Holland, but the other half was French in stock and speech and sympathy; and both halves—Flemings and Walloons—were united against the Protestant Dutch by their common attachment to the Catholic faith.

This profound difference king William, in the very first years of his reign, contrived to emphasise by his quarrels with the Belgian bishops and persistent efforts to interfere with the education of the clergy. The Flemish nobility and people stood by their priests to a man, and conceived the gravest distrust of their heretical monarch. Then as now, there existed a powerful liberal party in Belgium, and in this his majesty might have found an ally. Instead, with singular ineptitude, he succeeded in antagonising apparently irreconcilable foes, and throwing clericals and anti-clericals into each others' arms.

He could not refrain from favouring his old subjects at the expense of the new. All the sweets of office went to the Dutch. In a cabinet of seven, only one minister was Belgian; of thirty-nine diplomatists, thirty were Dutch; and the higher offices in the army and civil service were distributed with the same unfairness. Though, too, with the commercial instinct of his race, the king certainly promoted trade and industry throughout his dominions, he took care that the burden of taxation should fall most heavily on the southern provinces. If any import was levied on an article of diet, it was always the Belgian stomach that suffered. This partiality the

king attempted to mask by a policy of unification. In 1822 Dutch was made the official language throughout the kingdom, the only medium of expression in the law-courts and in public documents. This blow fell with peculiar force on the members of the bar in the Walloon provinces. Barristers of many years' standing had either to retire from business or start learning a new language. Liberal and catholic newspapers which protested against these acts of tyranny were virulently prosecuted. Every year the unrest in the southern provinces became more acute. Every section of the population had its own grievance, and a demand was heard for constitutional revision and a reform of the judicial system.

The Dutch king scoffed at these murmurs. Though impolitic, he was no fool, and understood far better than most sovereigns the theory and objects of government. He was not carried away as men were apt to be in those days by admiration for the English constitution, which he knew meant liberty for the subject simply to sink or swim, or for our laws designed chiefly for the protection of property and the enforcement of obsolete ethics. The jury system he dismissed as a mere survival of barbarous times. Ministerial responsibility, he argued, destroyed the moral responsibility of the sovereign, and, being collective, was no real responsibility at all.

"Our fathers," he observed to a Belgian deputy, "understood constitutional liberty better than we when they made it consist in the people's right to petition and to grant or to withhold supply. That was a sufficient guarantee of the people's liberty. We hear, too," continued his majesty, waxing warmer,

“of the force of public opinion, and are told that the press is its organ and should be the guide of rulers. Is this mighty power wielded, then, by sages or statesmen? No! often by a few men who go in for journalism as a trade—as a commercial enterprise. These you would make the censors of government and the arbiters of kings and nations!” With these latter remarks possibly some modern liberals would agree. King William concluded a singularly able defence of the patriarchal system of government by a comparison of the prosperity of Belgium under his rule with its condition under the French.

But when a most obnoxious tax was imposed on ground flour and butchers' meat, and the press prosecutions were resumed, his majesty's discontented subjects determined to employ the means he had himself designated as the people's best remedies. Monster petitions were presented to the king and the government. They were received with contempt, thus disproving William's own argument. The other privilege he had approved was then resorted to. In the states general the budget was rejected by a majority composed mainly of Belgian deputies; and the alliance meanwhile between the catholics and liberals grew every day closer.

The king, a stubborn Hollander, had no thought of yielding. In July came the news of the downfall of the Bourbons, the dethronement of Charles X., and the establishment of a liberal government in France. William saw in this no menace to himself, and attributed the French king's downfall to his alliance with the Jesuits. But there was thunder in the air. See, whispered the Belgians to one another,

with what ease a monarchy established by the congress of Vienna can be overthrown. Yet such was the Dutch authorities' sense of security that no objection was made to the presentation in Brussels on the night of August 25, 1830, of Auber's opera, *La Muette de Portici*, which referred to the rising of the Neapolitans under Masaniello against the Spaniards. This time the dumb spoke, and in terrible earnest. The fervent appeals to the patriotic instinct in the mouth of every character inflamed the audience and filled them with courage. Leaving the theatre, a mob rushed to the offices of the government newspaper, and finding the hated editor had escaped, wrecked the premises. The streets were cleared of soldiery and police, and the royal arms were torn down. The responsible part of the population held aloof, but all asked themselves if this was a riot or a revolution.

When the tidings reached The Hague, the insurgents found an unlikely mediator in their injured lord's son, the prince of Orange. Since he had been jilted by Charlotte, his highness had married a Russian princess and spent most of his time at Brussels, which he preferred to the dull, formal Dutch capital. His free-and-easy ways had earned him, perhaps, more popularity in Belgium than in England, though his escapades made the graver citizens frown, and there were queer rumours afloat that he had stolen his wife's diamonds. At his own request, the prince was sent to parley with the rebels. He was met at Vilvorde by a deputation of notables, and unattended except by them, courageously entered the city to discuss matters with the leaders of the riot. He was coldly

received, and could only promise to submit their statement of grievances to his father.

As soon as his back was turned, the rising was given a decisive turn by the arrival of a band of determined revolutionaries from Liège. William's concessions came too late. His offers of pardon were treated with scorn. The Dutch, under prince Frederick, advanced to suppress the revolt, but to the surprise of the citizens themselves, were repulsed after severe fighting. A provisional government was formed, comprising capable leaders such as Gendebien, Rogier, Vandeweyer, d'Hoogvorst, and Felix de Mérode. All the other towns in Belgium, except Antwerp, expelled their Dutch garrisons and signified their adherence to the national cause. The defenders of Brussels marched on Antwerp and drove the royal troops into the citadel. Thence the city was subjected to a bombardment. "Henceforth," cried the infuriated Belgians, "a river of blood flows between the house of Orange and the Belgian people."

This did not seem unpassable to a section of the more cautious insurgents, to the Flemings especially. They were disposed to listen when the prince of Orange talked of heading the movement for administrative independence, and he was encouraged even to pretend to an independent crown. Meanwhile, his father had notified the powers of the Belgian rebellion, and clamoured for their help. Prussia alone was disposed for a moment to help him. Russia and Austria had to cope with the Poles, who had also risen in insurrection. France, of course, was to some extent in sympathy with the Belgians. In England, George IV. had died, and his more liberal brother,

William, reigned in his stead ; the tory government was tottering to its fall, and could do no more than summon a conference at London, which on November 4 called on Dutch and Belgians alike to suspend hostilities, pending the decision of the powers.

Both obeyed. The armistice allowed Belgium breathing-space in which to review her position. On November 10 a national congress met at Brussels. A strong party among the Walloons sought the incorporation of their provinces with France. Had their wishes been consulted by the powers in 1815, and had only Flanders and Brabant been added to Holland, a really homogeneous state would have been created, which would probably have endured. A kingdom of the Netherlands extending from the Helder to Dunkirk and including London's great rival, Antwerp, would have been a strong enough barrier against France then and against Germany to-day ; and with a stronger frontier on the north-east, the French would have been relieved of that sense of insecurity which is still a danger to the peace of Europe.

However, not much was to be expected from a congress composed of statesmen who, like Metternich, spoke unconcernedly of the inevitable deluge, and, like Castlereagh, held that "security for seven or ten years was as much as human foresight could provide for." As a result of their fantastic dispositions, by a mere common animosity, these two peoples, Flemings and Walloons, were forced into an unnatural alliance, which was consummated on November 18 by the national congress in a declaration of the independence of Belgium. Thus was called into being

a state as artificial and factitious as the Austrian empire, wherein, after eighty years' existence, the original elements are more plainly distinct than at the beginning.

Overcoming a strong republican faction, the congress next pronounced in favour of a monarchical government, and in face of some opposition decreed the exclusion for ever of the house of Orange Nassau. This measure was by no means superfluous, for despite King William's avowal that he would rather see the republican journalist, De Potter, on the Belgian throne than his son, the prince of Orange posed as a candidate, and was approved by the English Tories. Even Lord Grey and his Whig colleagues, who succeeded to the ministry on November 16, for a long time favoured his royal highness's most unfilial pretensions, and abandoned him only when they found "another combination that might preserve Belgium as a barrier against France, without the aid of a restoration."

The negotiations at London proceeded very slowly. By the protocol of December 20, the independence of the new state was, to the chagrin of King William, virtually recognised. Meanwhile the Belgians busied themselves with the selection of a king. There were not wanting voices in favour of a native-born ruler, but the jealousy of the separate halves of the nation and above all the necessity of humouring the powers compelled the provisional government to look abroad.

We can imagine Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, upon the first tidings of the rebellion, speculating as to his chances of promotion. He had refused the crown

of Greece, indeed, but possibly that of Belgium might fit him better. The death of George IV. had brought his niece a step nearer to the throne, and in theatrical parlance, he had been "starring in the provinces" in the company of the little girl and her mother; but no man would prefer a regency to a realm. That he took early steps to bring his name before the Belgians, is plain; for it was mentioned by Vandeweyer, Devaux, and other members of the congress as early as November. Thus he found himself once more the rival of the prince of Orange—not for a princess but a throne.

M. Devaux was the first to put the Saxon prince's name before the assembly. Speaking on January 12, he said: "I am aware of the prejudice against an English prince—that the whole industrial interest is against such a choice; but it seems to be forgotten that this prince is English only by marriage, and that if he allied himself with France, in accepting the crown of Belgium, he would become more French than English. History, moreover, teaches us that a prince does not sacrifice the interests of the country which he governs to those of a country to which he has become a stranger. General opinion is also unfavourable to any but a catholic prince. For my part, I think the government should be neither catholic nor anti-catholic—simply just and liberal; and if there should be a prejudice at all in this election, it should be for a non-catholic prince. The only oppression to be feared with our constitution is that of the majority. Our whole political organisation reposes on the elective system, which is the rule of the majority; and the majority with us being catholic,

it is perhaps desirable that the chief of the state should not be so."

These wise words seem to have produced little impression at that time on the congress. The favourite nominees were duke August of Leuchtenberg, the son of Eugène Beauharnais by a Bavarian princess, and Louis Philip's youngest son, the duke of Nemours. The one represented the Bonapartist tradition, the other the principles of the liberal monarchy. But candidates sprang up from all quarters, some like the prince of Salm Salm, going so far as to advertise their qualifications and claims on the walls of the Belgian cities. The powers suggested prince Otho of Bavaria and a Neapolitan prince. These the heads of the provisional government dismissed as too young ; and disregarding the smaller fry, they sent Alexandre Gendebien to Paris to secure the duke of Nemours.

The old citizen king shook his pear-like head. He was flattered, of course, but the other powers would never consent to his son's mounting the throne of Belgium. And as to the duke of Leuchtenberg, his election would be construed as an insult to France. Gendebien then asked his majesty's opinion of Leopold of Coburg ; if he were elected, he might marry one of the king's daughters. "I have known the prince a long time," replied Louis Philip. "He is a fine cavalier, a perfect gentleman, very well bred, very well informed ; the queen knows him also and appreciates all his advantages ; but . . . there is a *but*, which implies nothing discourteous to the prince ; there are prejudices, family repugnances perhaps, which are against this union."

Dissatisfied with this vague refusal, the Belgian

envoy sought Sebastiani, the French minister of foreign affairs. The other candidates being out of the question, Leopold alone remained. If he was granted the hand of a French princess, so much the better; if not, they would have him for king of the Belgians all the same. Sebastiani rose to his feet: "If Coburg sets foot in Belgium," he cried, "we will receive him with cannon shot." "And we will ask England to reply," retorted Gendebien. "That will mean a general war!" "So be it. We prefer a general conflagration to our present uncertain state or to a restoration of the house of Orange." And the astute Belgian took his leave.

This was in the first week of January. The French king's refusal to permit his son to accept the proffered crown of course strengthened the chances of Leuchtenberg. The Belgians were not frightened of France, for as one of their chiefs (Lebeau) pointed out, the first shot fired by Louis Philip would be the signal for a legitimist uprising, which would probably be supported by Austria. These utterances caused Bresson, the French representative at Brussels, to push the duke of Nemours, solely in order to defeat the Bonapartist; and at the election on February 3 the Orleanist prince secured 97 votes against 74 given to his rival. The other powers at once vetoed the successful candidate, and so, according to his word, did his sagacious sire.

In this deadlock the Belgians elected as regent M. Surlet de Chokier. His first task was to combat and suppress some renewed demonstrations on behalf of his persistent highness of Orange. These, it was believed, were encouraged by England, which power



QUEEN VICTORIA.

After W. C. Ross, A.R.A.

in turn suspected France of having vetoed all the candidates only in order to bring about a partition of the country. Belgium was being sacrificed to the powers' inability to trust each other. All the members of the five great reigning houses, as well as the duke of Leuchtenberg, having been declared ineligible by the conference, Lebeau, the new prime minister, was obliged to fall back on Leopold as the only possible candidate. He succeeded in bringing round Lord Ponsonby, our agent at Brussels, to this view ; and Louis Philip, badly scared by the Bonapartist candidate, then withdrew his objections to the Coburg prince and even hinted that he might later on be disposed to consider a family alliance with him.

As the spring advanced it became plain that the election of Leopold afforded the best chance of securing the peace of Europe. Austria and Russia, which might have been hostile, had their hands tied by the Polish war ; and the Prussian envoy admitted that but for his friendship with King William, his master would be pleased to see his highness of Coburg on the newly created throne. Meantime, Lebeau worked diligently on the prince's behalf in Belgium itself. Negotiations were conducted entirely through Sir Edward Cust, Leopold's equerry. His highness himself studiously kept aloof and would not allow a single word to be written in his name on the subject ; " but he was kept well informed of all that was passing and was convinced long ere his election that an immense majority of deputies would vote in his favour, and that he would have the full assistance of the clergy

and high catholic laity." It is very much to his credit that as on the like previous occasion he never entertained the thought of changing his religion, and that he spent not a single shilling in support of his candidature.

Anxious to put an end to the ambiguous situation of his country, Lebeau sent over a deputation to ask the prince to consent to his immediate nomination. But Leopold had been made wary by the Greek business. The powers in conference had declared that they would not recognise any king of the Belgians who did not subscribe to their protocol of January 20. This had been acceded to with very ill grace by Holland, but had been rejected by Belgium, to whom it refused the province of Luxemburg and assigned an undue proportion of the Netherlands public debt. Despite the distracted state of the country and the hopelessly inchoate condition of their army, the Belgians were disposed to set the powers at defiance and to rely upon their own powers to retain the disputed territory and to consummate their independence.

Leopold had no thought of accepting a crown which was to be upheld only by untried swords. He received the deputation at Marlborough House on April 22. "In order," he told them, "to make my election possible, and useful to the Belgians, it must be associated with a solution of her territorial and financial difficulties, so that Belgium and her king may be recognised by Europe. I cannot accept the sovereignty of a state whose territory is still a matter of controversy to all the powers. That would be tantamount to placing myself in a state of war

with the whole world without any advantage to you."

This was not heroic but it was plain common sense. A native-born king might have felt called upon to accept his crown in defiance of the powers, but a foreigner could hardly have been expected to do so. Almost as he spoke the conference was drafting a peremptory order to the Belgians to evacuate the province of Luxemburg, threatening them with the arms of the German Confederation if they disobeyed. Their high mightinesses were, however, somewhat mollified by the proposal to elect Leopold, and instead of the order, Ponsonby presented a letter to the national congress, hinting that if they submitted to the protocol of January, Leopold and the powers together would find some means of adjusting the territorial problem in their favour.

This well-meant but rather rudely worded communication produced a painful impression on the assembly, but after a stormy debate, the ministry was authorised to treat with Holland and the conference for the acquisition of the disputed province in return for an indemnity. The congress next proceeded to the election of a king. Leopold secured 152 votes out of 196; of the minority, 14 votes were given to the regent, Surlet de Chokier, in the hope, it is believed, that his election would lead to annexation by France. The crown was to be offered to Leopold, with the express proviso that he should accept the constitution and swear to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of the nation.

The successful candidate was privately informed of his election, at Claremont three days later. He is

said to have shown deep emotion, which I suppose, in such circumstances, means unbounded delight. He was a man of careful habits, so it is unlikely that he rewarded the bringer of good tidings with a bag of golden sovereigns after the old kingly fashion. Moreover, the crown was not his yet. Belgium had still to come to terms with the powers. Refusing to depart from his cautious policy, the prince would not receive the deputation which came formally to offer him the kingship, till their fellow envoys had settled matters with the conference. The two Belgian deputations lodged in the same hotel, and the one was kept waiting, of course, on the results achieved by the other.

Leopold, meanwhile, was not idle. He used his influence with the English ministers and also with individual ambassadors to bring about a speedy and favourable solution of the problems at issue. He had also leisure to study the newly drafted constitution of his future kingdom. It seemed to him quite impracticable. "Gentlemen," he remarked to some of the Belgian emissaries, "it seems to me you have treated royalty rather rudely when it was not there to defend itself!" But for the restrictions the constitution placed on royal power, notwithstanding, he would probably have never been asked to mount the throne. When catholic opinion was excited against him, it had been appeased by the reminder in the assembly and the press that the sovereign would be bound hand and foot by the parliamentary majority.

Stockmar did much to relieve his master's apprehensions on this score. "Work with this constitution as long as you can," was his advice, "and if a time

should come when it seems unworkable, send a message to the chambers, frankly telling them so." Leopold's future subjects, on the other hand, had no misgivings ; and one of the delegates gleefully announced, after a conversation with him, that it would have been impossible to have made a better choice.

At last, on June 27, the powers agreed to substitute for the January protocol, the famous Eighteen Articles, by which the Luxemburg question was left open for further negotiation, and the amount of Belgium's share of the debt greatly reduced. On the very day the Belgium commissioners signed these articles, their colleagues were received at Marlborough House by his prudent highness, who accepted the crown, provided the treaty was ratified by the national congress. There was a further delay ; but on July 9, in the teeth of furious opposition, the articles were approved at Brussels. Even now the king-elect hesitated. He had a conference with the representatives of the powers. " Will you recognise me as king if Holland refuses her assent to the new protocol ? " he asked. " Yes, even then," replied Count Matusziewicz, on behalf of Russia, " for we should find means of forcing the king of the Netherlands to assent."

But when Count Weissenberg was sent to The Hague to intimate the will of the powers to King William, and his majesty flatly declined to recognise any settlement but that of January 20, Russia, like Austria and Prussia, broke faith with Leopold and announced that they must postpone their acknowledgment of his sovereignty. There was no Alexander now at St. Petersburg to fight on behalf of his protégé. But when England and France declared themselves

ready to keep their promise, Leopold, with a rare impulse of recklessness, resolved to take the sweets the gods offered and to take possession of his new kingdom forthwith.

On July 16, 1831, accordingly, he set out from London, accompanied by Stockmar and the Belgian deputation. He took with him only one English member of his old household, wishing in every way to emphasise his abandonment of the country he was leaving for the land over which he was to rule. The royal salutes with which he was greeted at Dover and again at Calais, told him that the two western powers had at least kept their word, and thus encouraged, if with chill forebodings, he proceeded towards Belgium. At the frontier beyond Dunkirk he was greeted by a deputation; and there on the sea-shore, with the golden sun of July overhead, new-made king and new-born nation plighted their troth.

The nuptials were solemnised a few days later. Passing through Ostend and Ghent, in which Oranienstadt he was, strange to say, accorded a hearty welcome, Leopold reached Laeken, his future home, on the night of the 18th, cheered by the acclamations of the crowd, the roar of the guns, and the light of a thousand torches. On the 21st he rode into the city of Brussels, at the head of a train of officers and notables, and proceeded through the streets lined with enthusiastic spectators, to the Place Royale. There, against the church of St. Jacques sur Caudenberg, a platform was raised, on which the regent and the president of the congress awaited him. Dismounting, Leopold took his place between them.

The regent having laid down his authority, one of the secretaries read the newly drafted constitution. Another secretary then handed the king-elect the form of the oath. "I swear," said Leopold in French, "to observe the constitution and the laws of the Belgian people, and to maintain the independence of the nation and the integrity of its territory." As he signed this declaration, the seats were hastily drawn aside and the throne was disclosed. De Gerlache, the president of the congress, addressed the king. "Sire, ascend the throne." And the first king of the Belgians stood upright in the seat of government before the assembled thousands.

He read his speech. "Belgian by adoption," he declared, "it will be the law of my life to be it also in politics. I have accepted the crown only to fill the noble and useful task of consolidating the institutions and maintaining the independence of a generous people. My heart has only one wish—to make you happy. If, in spite of so many sacrifices, we are menaced with war, I shall not hesitate to appeal to the courage of the Belgian people, and I hope that they will rally round their chief in defence of their country and their liberty."

CHAPTER VI

BELGIUM WINS A LOSING FIGHT

THUS, in the forty-first year of his age, Leopold reached the goal of his ambition, and first of all the posterity of Ernest the Pious wore a kingly diadem. But for this, before even his brow had grown used to it he was called upon to fight. King William of the Netherlands flouted the decision of the powers. He had adhered to the protocol of January ; this had been cancelled by the protocol of June, to which he refused to subscribe, and he announced that he considered himself free to reassert his claims in the revolted provinces. To the cession of Luxemburg he would never consent. He regarded it as an insult to him and to his nation that a prince should have dared to take possession of the Belgian throne without having satisfied the prescribed conditions of the conference, and had sworn to a constitution conflicting with the territorial rights of Holland.

The Dutch people to a man supported their monarch. The press preached the crusade against the Belgians. "The moment of the crisis has come," shouted the *Journal de la Haye*. "Let M. de Saxe-Coburg enjoy his triumph a few days longer, let him strut as a comedy-king on the boards of Brussels ! But when he hears the cannon of Holland, he will

realise his position ! . . . Prince of Saxe-Coburg, it is too late ! But for you the affairs of Belgium might have been settled by the intervention of the great powers ; but now a river of blood and tears must flow, since M. de Saxe-Coburg has dared to seat himself on the throne of King William ! ”

His irate majesty pointed to the portrait of Lieutenant van Speyk, who had blown himself and his ship into the air at Antwerp rather than surrender to the insurgents : “ I will die if needs be like that young hero ! ” he cried. “ Years ago,” hissed the enraged prince of Orange, “ Coburg robbed me of a bride, now he tries to rob me of a kingdom ! ” An army of 80,000 men was assembled in the middle of July along the Belgian frontier. The citadel of Antwerp was still held by the Dutch, commanded by General Chassé. On August 2 the prince of Orange, at the head of a corps of 36,000 men, with 72 guns, crossed the frontier at Baerle and advanced upon Louvain, while demonstrations were simultaneously made from Antwerp and Maestricht.

The news of the invasion was brought to Leopold in the midst of his triumphal reception at Liège. He at once sent for Lebeau, who had just resigned his seat in the cabinet. “ This is a nice welcome,” remarked his newly fledged majesty. “ If I had only had time to reorganise our army ! However, perhaps the struggle now will weld us and the nation more firmly together. What do you think about our army ? Is it capable of withstanding the enemy ? ” Lebeau admitted that it was not ; the only thing to do was to appeal to England and France for help. This was humiliating. “ I should much prefer,” said

Leopold, "to lead my troops against the Dutch. A success would do immense good to the nation and the dynasty; but, like you, I think the risk too great."

Lebeau told him to write at once to Louis Philip and to Lord Palmerston, while he sent off urgent instructions to the Belgian ministers at London and Paris. This done, Leopold hastened back to his capital, where he issued a manifesto to his people. Thence he went to Antwerp, which was threatened with a bombardment, and next to Malines, where he found himself, to his dismay, at the head of only 13,000 ill-drilled troops. There was another "army" on the Meuse, commanded by General Daine, an officer more remarkable for bravery than for captainship. He had been left by the war ministry, despite his protests, with only 9,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and 24 guns; he had neither provisions nor ammunition, and his batteries were only half horsed.

Yet, sublimely unconscious of their utter defencelessness, the nation shouted with joy at the renewal of hostilities, convinced that at the sight of the bloused workingmen of Belgium the invaders would run like hares. Such was their confidence that the government sent a messenger to Leopold, imploring him not to violate the constitution within a few days of his accession, by inviting foreign troops to enter the country. Belgium, they were mad enough to believe, could work out her own salvation. The king evasively replied that his appeal for assistance was intended to be contingent not absolute; no doubt, he said, the help of the powers would not be needed.

His appeal had reached the ears of Louis Philip

at five o'clock in the morning of August 4. The old king at once summoned his council, and it was resolved to protect the new nation against its former taskmaster. Marshal Gérard was ordered to concentrate fifty thousand men at Givet on the Meuse, and to march with all possible speed to the relief of Leopold. The marshal's preparations were arrested by a dispatch from General Belliard, the French envoy at Brussels. The Belgian king, yielding to the entreaties of his cabinet, and encouraged by the sluggishness of the enemy, had decided that the French army ought not to cross the frontier till its help was absolutely needed.

It very soon was. Perceiving the Dutch to occupy the line from Gheel to Zonhoven, Leopold ordered Daine to march north-westward and to join him near Aerschot. His lieutenant thought proper to disobey, and stood as if spellbound before Hasselt. Here, on the 8th, he was surrounded by the Dutch left wing; scarcely waiting to be attacked, his raw levies threw away their arms, and fled disgracefully towards Liège. Thinking something was left of them, the Dutch wasted time by pursuing them as far as Tongres; then wheeling round, the prince of Orange concentrated his forces near Diest, and advanced slowly upon Louvain.

Leopold heard the news of Daine's defeat at Aerschot. His army, reduced to fifteen thousand men, and these in the lowest depths of despondency, he fell back on the threatened city. There could be no doubt that foreign help was needed now. General Belliard, who was with the king, without waiting for his instructions, at once sent a messenger galloping to

Marshal Gérard, bidding him come with all speed ; and this was on August 9, three days only since he had been requested to countermand the order for an advance. There was, indeed, no time to lose. On the evening of the 11th, the slowly moving Dutch appeared before Louvain. The Belgians were soon forced to take refuge within the city walls. Leopold showed something of the valour and coolness he had given proof of eighteen years before in the Bohemian mountains. He was resolved that the Belgians if they blushed for themselves should have no cause to blush for their king. Opposed to him, his rival in love and war also maintained the reputation for courage he had earned at Waterloo, but his movements were as lethargic as a tortoise's. "The manœuvres ought to have been executed at the charge step—they were performed at funeral pace."¹

They were stopped by a horseman bearing a white flag. This was Lord William Russell, charged by the English ambassador to demand a truce and to inform the prince that the French army had already reached Brussels and was also advancing on his left flank. The victorious commander sent an aide-de-camp with Lord William to verify his statement, and continued his forward movement. In another moment, Leopold himself, with all his troops, must have been slaughtered or captured. Sir Robert Adair, the English ambassador, sprang on his horse and, followed by an attendant flourishing a white flag, gallantly rode helter-skelter across the line of fire, and summoned the prince of Orange to agree to a suspension of arms. Very reluctantly the

¹ Charles White, "The Belgic Revolution."

victor consented ; and it was well for him he did so, for the next morning the French outposts were seen in front of the Dutch. The army of King William, balked of its prey, turned its face to the north, and was escorted by the French to the frontier of Holland.

The Belgians, saved at the twelfth hour by the power whose help they had rejected, had evacuated Louvain and retired towards Malines. Leopold at the head of his cavalry rode away exposed to the jeers of the Dutch troops. Stockmar found him in a peasant's hut, lying on a bundle of straw, perfectly cheerful and whistling a tune. The day had been honourable for him as a man, if not as a king. "He fought as pluckily as a subaltern," said General Belliard, "and without him the Belgian army would have been annihilated."

England had replied to Belgium's earnest cry for help by ordering the Channel fleet into the North Sea ; a demonstration which did not arrest the movements of the Dutch army on land. It was the same story as of our platonic sympathy with Poland, Hungary, and Denmark. Our cabinet showed no concern for the hapless little state or for the prince who, relying on our support, had taken its helm. Instead, having let the French pull the chestnuts out of the fire, Lord Palmerston was anxious only for the immediate withdrawal of their troops. Foreign policy at Downing Street has never meant, and never will mean anything but an inveterate distrust of some one power for the time being—it may be France, Russia, or Germany. Palmerston was insane enough to suspect France of having instigated the Dutch invasion as a pretext for her interven-

tion; ¹ and he now persuaded himself that the French meant to stay in Belgium.

Louis Philip had no such intention, but having done single-handed all the work of the conference, he thought the moment opportune to suggest the demolition of the Belgian fortresses, which were a menace to his dominions. But the English cabinet bullied and stormed, and the wise old king withdrew his troops. Leopold implored him to leave at least a division, and to this Palmerston, who had not sent a single red-coat to his assistance, grudgingly consented. Even Stockmar, though he rated our foreign secretary roundly, and told him that the confidence of Belgium in England was considerably shaken, allowed himself to be carried away by his silly hatred of the French, and advised his master to act as if they *really* were the friends of Belgium. That hardly needed proof: the French were not merely the friends but the saviours of Belgium, as Leopold very well knew, and but for them that country would not figure on the map of Europe to-day. Our cabinet would no doubt have *protested* against its reconquest by the Dutch, as she did against the ill-treatment of the Poles and Hungarians and more lately against the absorption of Bosnia by Austria.

What English sympathy was worth, Stockmar very soon found out. "Belgium had been defeated," Palmerston reminded him, and could no longer expect the eighteen articles in their entirety. If she refused all concessions, the conference would let her fight out her quarrel with Holland alone. Leopold's position was terribly weakened by the disaster at

¹ Letter to Lord Granville, August 5, 1831.

Louvain. His enemies in England were many, among them was the queen Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen, the daughter of a house which since the Jena year had opposed the Coburgs. The exiled Bourbons were also stirring up the cauldron, and hoped to produce a general war by which they might profit. Holland, flushed with victory and encouraged by the northern powers, was ready to resume hostilities on October 10, on which date the armistice concluded at Louvain would cease.

It is not to be wondered at that the perplexed prince for a moment thought of abdicating.¹ He was cheered by the loyalty and kindness of his people, who, to their eternal honour, forbore to reproach him with their misfortunes and rallied round his tottering throne. Stockmar, on the other hand, plagued him with alarming dispatches from London, exhorting him to be of good courage, and doing his best to undermine his resolution; warning him to beware of the wicked French and the next moment advising him to rely upon them chiefly. The doctor's suspicions were certainly excused by the tortuous tactics adopted by Talleyrand at the conference, who persisted in suggesting the partition of Belgium, contrary to the real intentions of his own sovereign. He was encouraged by the Dutch representatives, who said that King William would rather see Louis Philip than Leopold at Brussels. This made Palmerston anxious to conciliate Belgium.

The terms offered by the conference on October 15 were rather more favourable than the defeated nation had a right to expect. The fortress of Maestricht

¹ Stockmar's "Memoirs," vol. i., p. 205.

was assigned to Holland, and the western half of Luxemburg to Belgium; but the portion of debt allocated to the new state was unexpectedly large, and navigation on the Scheldt was to be subject to the payment of dues to the Dutch.

Yet Leopold and his subjects bitterly resented these terms. "Here am I," the king wrote to Palmerston, "who was only induced to accept the throne of Belgium on certain conditions, which the allies solemnly guaranteed to me. The king of Holland defies the allies, and attacks me in consequence of those conditions, and now I am required to agree to things, which, if they had been imposed on me originally, I should have refused." He had no course but to yield. He laid the treaty before the chambers, resolved if it was rejected to call a new parliament, and if that also proved obstinate, to abdicate. But the Belgians are a practical people, and their representatives approved the articles on November 1, 1831. The way to safety led between the Caudine Forks. The treaty was signed at London a fortnight later, and the powers guaranteed its execution.

But Leopold's troubles and Belgium's danger were far from ended. The northern powers had been wrangling ever since April with France as to the dismantling of the Belgian fortresses along the French frontier. Some Louis Philip regarded as a menace, others as a safeguard,¹ and the king of the Belgians

¹ The northern powers selected for demolition Philippeville and Marienbourg, which closed the valley of the Meuse to a possible invader of France from the side of Prussia, and spared Tournai, which could only be regarded as a bulwark against her.



LEOPOLD I., KING OF THE BELGIANS.

After Winterhalter.

was at his wits' end to reconcile his five masters. France now threatened not to ratify the last treaty unless her wishes were respected in this matter, and Palmerston by his haughty rejoinders added fuel to the flame of Gallic wrath. Luckily for Europe, Leopold and Louis Philip were men of sense, and at the Belgian cabinet's suggestion, explanations were exchanged which wholly satisfied France and dispersed the war clouds on that horizon. Even now, however, Russia made her ratification of the treaty conditional on the assent of the king of Holland, which that obstinate prince still withheld.

Leopold foreseeing a renewal of the storm in that quarter, determined to consolidate his relations with his best friend. He visited Louis Philip and his family at Compiègne on May 19, 1832, and was back at Brussels on June 2. Short though the visit was, he had time enough to obtain the old king's consent to the match he had so long desired with one of the French princesses. Louise of Orléans, then in her twentieth year, was selected for his bride. She had known her suitor, as far as a French girl of high birth can be said to know any man outside her own family, for the greater part of her life, and he proved a pleasing contrast to most royal suitors in his indifference as to her dowry. In every other way, too, he showed himself anxious to please and to consult the interests of his future wife. The man may not have been a paladin, but he was in all things a kindly natured gentleman.

The alliance, strange to say, did not excite the suspicions of the English government. They did not see in it one of the diabolical machinations of

Louis Philip, but in a rare interval of sanity, perceived that it would be the best possible barrier against the absorption of the little state by the great one. The powers being willing and the girl herself not dissenting, the marriage was solemnised at Compiègne, on August 9, according to civil law and the rites of the catholic and lutheran churches. Four days after the king and queen of the Belgians set out for Brussels, where their homecoming was regarded as another step towards the final establishment of the kingdom's independence.

Very soon after his second marriage, Leopold was most disagreeably put in mind of the benefits he had received from the first. No conditions whatever had been attached to the annuity of £50,000 settled on him by the British parliament when he married Charlotte: he was legally free to spend every penny of it abroad and was required to perform no services in return. But as time went on, John Bull, for all his love of a lord, came to realise that this was not business. England in the Reform years was not the same nation which had fawned upon the allied sovereigns and clamoured to kiss the greasy faces of their Cossacks. In 1831 men began to repent of the bond into which their corrupt and foolish rulers had hurried them fifteen years before. The murmuring threatened to become articulate when it was known that Leopold was about to put on the crown of another country. His old foe, Lord Londonderry, proposed to reopen the question in parliament.

It does not seem that the king-elect had any conscientious scruples about continuing to take the money, but he did not wish to be deprived of it by

force, and, as Stockmar pointed out to him, he would lose respect in the eyes of his future subjects if he remained a pensioner of England. Before he left London, accordingly, he wrote to Lord Grey announcing that as soon as he had paid all his English debts he would return, year by year, his annuity to the treasury, deducting, however, the cost of the upkeep of his estate at Claremont and all the pensions and charitable subscriptions which he might determine to continue. This very partial renunciation was greeted with applause in the House of Lords, where the duke of Wellington remarked that the prince held his annuity by as good a title as their lordships held their estates—a comment with which I venture heartily to agree. The matter was then dropped for a time, though (Stockmar thought) both Whigs and Tories would have been glad to gain popularity by attacking the prince on this score.

It took a long time to carry the surrender into effect. Leopold owed no less than £83,000, including sums which he had contracted for on behalf of the duchess of Kent, and the expenses with which he had charged his pension amounted to £20,000 a year. Stockmar, who acted as liquidator, was, therefore, unable to pay any money into the exchequer the first year. The English people grew impatient and suspicious, and it was rumoured that the money was being sent over to Belgium. The medical baron was disgusted at such ingratitude, when his master had promised to return some of the money which the nation paid him for doing nothing. "The Reform movement," he explains, with fine scorn, "had brought Radicals and demagogues to the surface,

who made political capital of the supposed misery of the people, urged the necessity of economical reforms, and indulged in attacks and calumnies against persons in high positions."

These low fellows did not, perhaps, differ greatly from the agitators and demagogues who had placed Leopold on the Belgian throne. In the sessions of 1832 and 1833 they bothered the government with inconvenient questions as to whether any money had so far been refunded by his majesty, and on February 11, 1834, a member of parliament named Robinson expressed his wonder that the king of the Belgians could as an honourable man continue to draw the annuity. The charges made by him on the pension might very well eat it up altogether. As to the debts contracted by the recipient, went on this vulgar demagogue, they came as a great surprise to everybody, as there was a general impression that his royal highness had been of very parsimonious habits. Cobbett spoke quite as roundly and as rudely. Sir Samuel Whalley, a mental specialist, continuing the debate, moved to appoint a special committee to inquire into the application of the annuity since it had been renounced. This motion was declared to be out of order; and Mr. Robinson wound up by asking what had become of the £135,000 paid to the king since his accession, and suggesting that he had just put it in his pocket.

These unseemly inquiries possibly hastened the work of liquidation, for in May 1834 Stockmar was able to pay several thousand pounds into the treasury, and from that date onwards, till the day of Leopold's death, the trustees returned £30,000 a year, and even more, into the public funds. It would have been

more dignified to have renounced the annuity unconditionally, though it would, on the other hand, have been unfair to saddle the king's new subjects with the payment of his English obligations. The allegations in parliament mortified him exceedingly. "One of the things which the English best understand," he wrote in March 1848, "is the art of calumniating. For inasmuch as a 'character' in England is considered something positive and tangible, every effort is made to destroy it." In spite of such attacks, however, it seems to me that his majesty had not much reason to complain of his treatment by the English people.

To these minor annoyances was added in the year of his second marriage the likelihood of further hostilities with Holland. The stubborn Dutch still refused to evacuate the citadel of Antwerp or to accept the latest treaty. The powers urged Leopold to negotiate with Holland directly, and when he had dismissed one ministry which would not do this, and appointed another more amenable, it was found that the Dutch terms were quite unacceptable.

Even England's patience was now at an end, and in November 1832 she sent her fleet to join the French in a blockade of the Dutch coast. For the second time Marshal Gérard led an army into Belgium and laid siege to Antwerp citadel. Leopold fired his headquarters at Lierre, ready to join the citizens if the town were threatened with a bombardment. To this the besieged did not resort. They made, under the command of General Chassé, an obstinate defence, while the good people of Antwerp paid high prices for seats whence to view the siege. On

December 23 the defenders capitulated, and on the 31st the Belgian troops took possession of the ruined stronghold. A few days after, the French again left the country. The Dutch king held out till May, when the complaints of his own subjects compelled him to agree to an indefinite armistice which left Belgium in possession of the disputed territories till a permanent treaty should be signed.

For this final settlement Leopold was in no hurry. He could get on very well without the formal recognition of his sullen neighbour, and meanwhile his reign extended over the whole of the provinces of Limburg and all Luxemburg, except the capital. The longer these districts remained attached to Belgium, the less easy would it be to drag them away. In preparation for the possible struggle, Leopold urged, in season and out of season, upon the chambers the necessity of reorganising and increasing the army. He was nobly seconded by his people, who smarted, like him, under the humiliation of 1831, and longed to illustrate their independence by a victory in the field. Belgium's position grew every day stronger. Louis Philip could not but be solicitous for the country over which his daughter reigned as queen, and in June 1837 Leopold's niece, Victoria, mounted the throne of Britain.

When, therefore, in March 1838 King William at last declared himself ready to sign the treaty of November 1831, and thereby recover parts of Luxemburg and Limburg, the little kingdom made ready to resist. Leopold, like William, was now prepared to defy Europe. He had 116,000 men under arms; France and England were allied with him; why should

he surrender at this late hour territories which had become practically part of his kingdom ? The powers sternly insisted on the execution of the treaty. Palmerston would have supported him, but was overborne by his colleagues. Louis Philip, anxious to follow England's lead, at once advised his son-in-law to yield. To resist would mean a general war—the Nestor of Europe was prepared to join the powers in a campaign against Belgium rather than risk that. He could not be persuaded by the queen, his daughter, to propose to the powers the surrender of the territory to Belgium in exchange for an indemnity. “Do not blame me,” he wrote to Leopold, “for having drawn you into this wasps’ nest in order to possess myself of your remains.”

In spite of Leopold's efforts and of the violent outcry of the Belgian people and parliament, the powers remained firm. The only concession was a further reduction of the share of the Netherlands debt. On April 19, 1838, before signing the treaty which finally constituted the kingdom of Belgium within its present limits, Leopold's ambassador in London addressed these words to the conference : “His majesty owed a last effort to those peoples which have shown for him so much affection and devotion, and in renouncing them, it is less on account of the dangers which threaten Belgium generally than out of consideration of the evils to which a war would expose these provinces of Limburg and Luxemburg. Never has his majesty felt more painfully the weight of the task which he accepted in the interests of peace and to constitute a nationality, which had become a necessary condition of European politics. He finds

some consolation in the thought that this nation and the general peace are henceforward guaranteed against every assault."

This formal acknowledgment of the independence of his old subjects was almost as painful to William I. of Holland. Two years later, he resigned the crown, and assumed the title of count of Nassau. He went to Berlin, where, running counter to his antipathy, he married a Belgian lady, the countess Henriette d'Oultremont. He lived three years longer. His son, Leopold's old rival, succeeded him on the Dutch throne. In spite of his victory at Louvain, he was never quite forgiven by his people for his intrigues with the Belgians. For his want of popularity he endeavoured to make up by the firmness of his rule, and under the influence of his Russian wife he showed himself the foe of political reform. In statecraft, as in war, he proved himself the faithful disciple of the duke of Wellington. He died in 1849, without having done much to make good the losses his country had sustained nineteen years before.

CHAPTER VII

A COBURG IN PORTUGAL

BEFORE Leopold was sure of his own crown, he was seeking for others to put on the heads of his kinsfolk. His ambition could not be satisfied with the headship of a petty neutral state ; his fingers itched to pull the wires of international policy. The blood, too, of the Coburgs was not only blue but very thick. A strong feeling of fellowship united them, and the eyes of the numerous brothers and cousins and nephews all turned expectantly to the member of the house who had done so well for himself. In satisfying his ambition and aggrandising his relations, Leopold also hoped to strengthen the position of his new kingdom which had received so cold a welcome from the powers. So from the moment of his elevation almost till his death, we shall find the king of the Belgians watching ever for opportunities to promote the interests of his dynasty, and by his counsels and his friendships striving to influence the destinies of countries remote from his own.

In the delight and excitement of securing one crown, he continued to be haunted by the thought of the other which he had lost. Greece inspired in him, as we know, a strange sentimental interest, and the anarchy into which she was plunged upon the

assassination of Kapodistrias pricked his conscience. In the midst of war's alarms, when Belgium was fighting for her existence, a means occurred to him of stilling his remorse and advancing the family fortunes at the same time. Why should not his brother, Duke Ernest, take his place on the throne of Greece?

While the fate of Belgium was still held in the balance at the November conference, his majesty made this suggestion to the assembled plenipotentiaries. Palmerston was willing to please him, Louis Philip was favourable. But the duke proved to be every whit as cautious as his younger brother. He insisted on the same boundaries which had been refused two years before, hoping also that England would give him the Ionian Isles. "It is not to be doubted," says his son and successor, "that the western powers were frightened back by the slow progress of the negotiations with my father; for when he sent the final conditions to King Leopold, Louis of Bavaria had already completed an agreement for his son Otto. But the London protocol of February 13, 1832, offering the Grecian throne to prince Otto of Bavaria vouched for none of the things which my father and uncle had deemed necessary, and therefore it could not be said that the king of Bavaria showed great foresight in the matter." In the long run, however, the powers were obliged to concede the frontier so long asked for to the Hellenic kingdom.

A brother on the shaky throne of Greece would of course have been of much less use to Leopold than a friend in a slightly lower position nearer home. The king, therefore, resigned the Hellenes to their

fate, and sought to find alliances for Belgium in the west. By the northern courts he was regarded with aversion and a traitor to his order for having taken a revolutionary crown. Many of the German princes would not visit the court of Coburg for fear the horrid name of Belgium should be uttered there. As the conservative north frowned upon him, Leopold had perforce to look for friends in the more enlightened south. Spain and Italy were, it is true, in the grip of despots ; but in Portugal, as in France and Belgium, the constitutional monarchy promised to triumph over the absolute.

John VI., the Portuguese king, had died in 1826, leaving two sons. The elder, Pedro, was already emperor of Brazil ; and having presented Portugal with a new constitutional charter, he abdicated its throne after a reign of two months, in favour of his seven-years-old daughter, Maria da Gloria. He appointed his brother Miguel regent, on the understanding that he should marry the young queen when she was old enough. The prince swore allegiance to his niece and the charter, but, six months later, allowed himself to be declared absolute king. Maria da Gloria was sent off to England, where, says a Portuguese historian, the court treated her as queen, and Wellington and his colleagues treated her followers as brigands.

The island of Terceira, in the far-off Azores, alone held out for the child-queen, and soon proved to be the nucleus of a formidable revolt against the usurper. The garrison was recruited in 1830 by liberals fresh from their successes in western Europe ; and on the very morrow of their own revolution a

strong contingent of Belgian volunteers sailed from Ostend to fight for Maria da Gloria and the charter.

In the next year, Dom Pedro, having resigned the crown of Brazil, came over to Europe to help his daughter. He took her from London, where her stepmother had been scandalously received by Wellington, and sought the generous hospitality of the French court. Like Louis Philip, Leopold perceived in Pedro a natural ally. He willingly consented to a second levy of Belgian volunteers, who took part in the descent upon Portugal in June 1832. Miguel, being, or suspected of being, a tyrant, had the moral support of all the northern courts ; but the war ended in 1834 by his expulsion from the kingdom and the establishment of Maria da Gloria as constitutional queen.

Unluckily for her, her father died four months after his triumph. For her husband he had already chosen his second wife's brother, duke August of Leuchtenberg, Leopold's late competitor. This sadly chagrined the king of the French, who had some claims on the ex-emperor's gratitude, and had designed the little queen for his seductive son, Louis of Nemours. A Bonaparte, too, was only a degree less offensive at Lisbon than at Brussels. The marriage, notwithstanding, was celebrated ; but the duke died three months after, on March 25, 1835.

The name of Nemours was at once suggested as that of his successor ; but Palmerston, who was now at Downing Street, promptly vetoed the match, though it was strongly approved by the Portuguese themselves. Then the dead duke's brother was talked of ; and then the prince of Carignano, the

king of Sardinia's cousin. There were objections to both; and meanwhile the English ministers were on thorns lest Louis Philip should play them some trick and marry his son to the queen under the guns of their warships.

It was now that his observant majesty of the Belgians thought of the Catholic branch of his family, which had taken root in Hungary. His brother Ferdinand had been invested with the fiefs and dignities of his wife's dead father, the prince of Kohary, and had become, in consequence, one of the greatest magnates in the empire. He had four children: Ferdinand, born in 1816—the year of his marriage; August, born in 1818; a daughter, Victoria, born in 1822; and another son, Leopold, born two years later. The eldest had been thought of by Leopold, on the death of his firstborn in infancy, as successor to his throne, despite the remonstrances of France. He was now nineteen years old, and a very suitable husband for a girl of sixteen.

At first sight alliance with Portugal might not seem to be of much value to Belgium; but it was not to be despised by a cadet branch of the house of Coburg. It seems to have been Leopold himself who first brought his nephew's name forward. Had it been Stockmar, that diplomatist would certainly have told us so. It is probable, however, that he was deputed to suggest the prince to Count Lavradio, the Portuguese envoy to the English court.

The proposal had much to recommend it to diplomatists. The house of Coburg was allied by blood with the prospective queen of England and by marriage with the reigning king of the French. In

Portugal, the aid given by the Belgians was remembered with gratitude, and Leopold as a constitutional king of the new school was regarded with sympathy. Howard de Walden, the English representative at Lisbon, was instructed to countenance young Ferdinand's suit, and Louis Philip forbade the pretensions of his son, though, of course, Lord Palmerston refused to believe this and continued to talk about French intrigues, cabals, mystifications, duplicity, and so forth. In spite of the real opposition of the Loulés, the young queen's cousins, the match was in the end consented to by her, and was approved by the cortes. Ferdinand of Coburg Kohary was invited to solicit the hand of the queen of Portugal.

His highness was loath to do so. His education had been that of a country gentleman, and nowise fitted him to share the burdens of a rickety government. He took, so far, no interest in political matters, and was an enthusiastic devotee of the arts. He was far better qualified to wield the brush than the sceptre. Moreover, few lads of nineteen are eager to marry foreign young ladies whom they have never seen. General Goblet, one of Leopold's most trusted agents, hints that his reluctance was very strong. "What," he muses, "were his first emotions when the overtures of the Portuguese government invaded the peace of his Hungarian home? The idleness and timidity of youth in conflict with the call of ambition and family traditions must have resulted in painful and intimate struggles, of which the hearth of the Koharys has preserved the secret. But, beyond doubt, King Leopold had to put forth all his authority to overcome the modest repugnance of his august nephew."

Much had also to be done to satisfy the doubts of father Ferdinand, one of the most cautious and circumspect of men, who had no great faith in the stability of the Portuguese throne. When Stockmar and Lavradio met him at Coburg to discuss the marriage treaty, he demanded that all its provisions should be guaranteed by England. The baron told him that this was too much. All that he could promise on behalf of England was a reception for Ferdinand at her court, a warship to escort him to Lisbon, and the assistance of her envoy when he got there.

The articles were signed at Coburg on December 1, 1835, and at Lisbon two months later. Ferdinand renounced all claims to his Hungarian nationality and patrimony. The Portuguese government settled on him an allowance of about £9,000 a year, which was to be doubled upon the birth of a son, when he would also receive the title of king. Upon the insistence of his family, he was more grudgingly guaranteed all the posts and privileges held by the duke of Leuchtenberg. Among these was the office of commander-in-chief of the army, which a strong party in Portugal had declared ought never to be held by a member of the royal family. But the marshal's baton appealed strongly to the youthful imagination of Ferdinand; and he refused to waive his claim to it. Very sadly, and almost tearfully, he then turned his back on the pleasant greenwood of Thuringia, and set out for a land which then seemed so far away.

He went first to Brussels, where he was, at Stockmar's advice, introduced to political life. His uncle took him in hand and crammed him for the kingly profession, writing down for him "everything which

he ought to know about the organisation of a government in general and what will be necessary in specie to carry on successfully the government in Portugal." So wrote King Leopold to the princess Victoria on March 4, 1836. The science of government thus expounded by a professional seems to be simpler than laymen suppose. The air of Brussels and this short course in kingcraft made the prince, we are told, "quite another person." He went to Paris to receive Louis Philip's blessing, and then on to London.

His cousin Victoria was delighted with him. Writing to Brussels on March 29, she refers to "our beloved Ferdinand," and extols his simplicity and goodness of heart. He made, she adds, a good impression on all parties—"for *I* have heard even from some great Tories that there was a great feeling for him in this country." The emphasis is explained, I suppose, by the dislike with which the future queen knew herself to be regarded by the Tory party. The prince was, in fact, a rather fine-looking young fellow. He was tall, which Palmerston remarked was a good thing, as the Portuguese were short, and when he bent down to listen to them they would think it condescension. He was graceful in form and manner, and his face was cast in the pensive, intellectual mould. His voice, however, was peculiar and harsh; when he spoke English, it seemed to be with an American accent. At the courts he had so far visited he had, to the disgust of the old-fashioned princes, been accorded royal honours—a distinction which caused him to stiffen his back and carry his head rather higher than was prudent.

Before he left our shores he was disagreeably



FERDINAND, KING-CONSORT OF PORTUGAL, AGED TWENTY-ONE.

startled to receive a letter from Lisbon, purporting to come from an officer who had long loved his bride and was by her beloved; he was implored not to desolate two fond hearts at the bidding of a cruel diplomacy. The appeal was of the kind Don Quixote might have penned to a rival for the favour of Dulcinea, and was signed De Souza Canavarro, lieutenant. It might have roused some scruples in Ferdinand's youthful conscience, but it soon turned out to be a fraud and was indignantly disclaimed by the supposed writer. It was pretty generally believed to be a last effort on the part of the French faction at Lisbon. When it was heard of by Maria da Gloria, a very unseemly row disturbed the calm of the royal abode.

On April 4, four days before her husband-elect landed at Lisbon, the Portuguese queen completed her seventeenth year. Like most women of Brazilian birth, she would have seemed to our northern eyes to be at least ten years older. She was stout, and grew fatter every year. Though a queen, she had no reputation for beauty; but the duke of Coburg, writing four years later, said that her head was fine and that she was by no means as ill-formed as people pretended. None of her portraits, he assures us, did her justice, though one of them was painted by Sir Thomas Laurence. As to her manner, continued the duke, "she never speaks to strangers, and wastes but few words on her courtiers. What is taken for embarrassment is really design, and what so many people have called want of education is simply originality. I take her for a thoroughly clever woman, for, as long as I have been here, I have never heard a mistaken or illogical opinion from her lips, nor any

flat or hasty remark. Everything which Donha Maria says is apposite, and generally accompanied by a keen display of wit. She hears and notices everything, and, as Ferdinand assures me, can comprehend the most difficult matter at a glance. You may imagine that we have talked on the most varied subjects, and naturally often touched on topics which lie farther removed from a woman's range of ideas, yet I have often noticed with pleasure how much interest she takes in everything and how little inclined she is to be prejudiced."

For all that, Maria da Gloria seems to have been as little qualified to direct the affairs of a nation as most of those whom the accident of birth has set upon a throne. Like them, she probably had no ideas at all as to the causes and remedies of human ills, to many of which her religious training would have blinded her. Her cleverness she used chiefly to further her personal interests and to strengthen her authority. Of that a large measure had been preserved to her by her father's charter, under which the Portuguese did not find themselves much better off than under Dom Miguel. The country was exhausted by the long fever of civil war, and discontent was rife among the educated classes. There was a strong party in favour of the earlier and much more democratic constitution of 1822, and their conflict with the chartists lasted practically throughout the reign.

Leopold either believed, or affected to believe, that his utterly inexperienced nephew, by merely following his written instructions, would be able to consolidate the young constitutional monarchy. If the prince

himself shared this belief, it must have been shaken by the coolness of his reception at Lisbon on April 8. The queen fell in love with him at once, and he became sincerely if not warmly fond of her; but neither on the day of his landing nor on that of his marriage (April 9) was he greeted by a cheer or a smile from the gazing thousands. His coming made a rift between court and people, which widened daily. He was looked upon with suspicion as a foreigner and a protégé of England, and the proposal to appoint him to the command of the army had aroused a storm of opposition in the cortes. But the queen, in the first fervour of her fondness, insisted upon the fulfilment of her promise, and Ferdinand unwisely took the proffered baton.

His appointment was of doubtful legality; and he did not endear himself to the troops by rating them, in his first order of the day, for their irregularities and insubordination and by promising to enforce a rigid discipline. For a raw youth of nineteen to address such language to an army largely composed of veterans was to make himself egregiously ridiculous. Following his uncle's early example in England, Ferdinand stood too much upon his dignity, treated the nobility with coldness, and allowed very few of the grandees to sit in his presence. He liked, however, to show himself in public. Only a fall from his horse prevented him from walking in the public procession at Corpus Christi; and he rode himself in the steeplechase at Campo Grande, astonishing the Portuguese by his daring leaps.

His blunders were not corrected by the two Mentors who had accompanied him to Portugal, Herr Dietz and

Sylvain van de Weyer. The first of these was his old tutor, a Coburg professor, who worshipped the very ground he walked on and would have laid down his life for his sake. This intense devotion, though it implied disinterestedness, of course blinded the worthy preceptor to his darling's failings, and more often still, to anybody's rights or claims when opposed to his. Dietz knew nothing about politics and very little about the world at large. He believed in the patriarchal system of government, even if it had to be carried on by a girl of seventeen and a boy two years older. Constitutional limitations of any kind he abhorred, and in the future of Portugal he had no faith at all. His simplicity and transparent honesty won him a measure of respect even from the liberals, whom he hated; and Ferdinand, during the first three or four years of his married life, seems to have relied upon him as a child on its mother. This influence naturally grew weaker as the years went by; but it lasted quite long enough to persuade his highness that the destinies of Portugal could be safe only in his hands.

From the first Dietz had devoted himself to procuring his pupil's complete dominion over the mind of the queen. He early came in collision with the Lavradio family, who in the person of the duchess of Ficalho and two other ladies, constituted the royal camarilla or private council. The contest was long and bitter, but the sturdy Coburger won by flatly threatening to return to Germany if the obnoxious dames were not removed to a safe distance from the queen. Another of her majesty's confidential advisers he could not, or perhaps did not, try to oust.

In father Marcos, the queen's chaplain and Ferdinand's confessor, he recognised views akin to his own allied to a disposition less sympathetic. His reverence was a jovial monk of the Rabelaisian type, whose buffoonery had endeared him to the royal boy and girl. In earlier days he had been distinguished by his zeal for the constitutional cause, and had been confessor to Dom Pedro; but he had long since made the interests of the court his own and took a dreadful revenge upon his old associates by boring them well nigh to extinction in the cortes with long-winded speeches.

Sylvain van de Weyer was a counsellor of another type. He had come with Ferdinand in his uncle's stead, and personified that monarch's influence. His task it was to continue the prince's political education and to guide his infant steps. As one of the founders of the constitutional monarchy of Belgium, as an ex-revolutionary, as an experienced diplomatist, Van de Weyer should have been most helpful not only to Ferdinand but to the Portuguese. He was not. Only two days after his arrival in the country, the Belgian statesman allowed himself to be prepossessed by the gloomy picture of affairs drawn by a Portuguese politician, probably Count Lavradio.¹ He became convinced that the country was on the verge of an abyss, that the people were tired of representative institutions, and that Dom Miguel might loom up, brandishing his sword, at any moment.

While professing his faith in the charter, it is clear that he relied still more upon the crown, and joined with Dietz in urging the prince and the queen to

¹ Th. Juste, "Sylvain van de Weyer."

resist vigorously the slightest encroachment on their authority. He was sure, of course, of the approval of his sovereign, who cared a great deal more for the house of Coburg than for the welfare of Portugal. "The courage and firmness of my nephew," wrote his majesty on April 30, 1836, "are his best weapons. I am convinced that whoever has the courage to remain firm in a political crisis, if he has any means of action at his disposal, will never be easily displaced. and I cannot help thinking that Louis XVI. was treated by the Convention with respect till the moment that he ordered the Swiss Guards to lay down their arms."

I cannot help thinking that this was dangerous advice to give a hot-headed and vainglorious boy in the midst of an utterly unknown nation. Advice from abroad, whether good or bad, was, for that matter, dangerous to him. The Portuguese were altogether tired of the domineering patronage of England, and they would certainly not be more tolerant of Belgian influence. Within five months of his arrival, the prince had got the ship of state upon the rocks. Returning on September 2 from Cintra, he and Maria found the people demanding the dismissal of the ministers and the re-establishment of the constitution of 1822.

Ferdinand, urged by Van de Weyer, to put himself at the head of the troops, found they had all deserted him. All that he and his counsellors could then suggest to the queen was to take refuge on the English fleet. Maria had sense enough to see the mad imprudence of such a step. She alone showed courage, and faced the insurgents. Bowing to the inevitable,

she signed the decree for the promulgation of the old constitution, tears coursing down her cheeks the while. This done, though entreated by Howard de Walden and his Belgian colleague to abandon her country, she appointed a liberal ministry under the Viscount Sà da Bandeira, and solemnly swore to observe the new system of government in presence of the people.

It need hardly be said that neither she nor the diplomatists considered she was in any way bound by her oath. The constitution she believed to be fatal to her existence as a queen, since it limited her authority to a merely suspensory veto on the acts of the single house of parliament. Certainly some sovereigns have possessed less power and grown old in the respect and affection of their nominal subjects, but Maria, herself a Latin, knew that Latin peoples end by abolishing what is really useless or obsolete. She could not have deluded herself into supposing that the suspensory veto exercised by a girl in her teens would satisfy the Portuguese of the value of monarchy.

These fears were shared by Van de Weyer, who wrote to Leopold, beseeching him to secure the armed intervention of England and France. The Belgian statesman, himself the promoter of a revolution, was prepared to coerce a free people by force of arms. Palmerston and Louis Philip were not. To Leopold's appeal they replied that they were ready to intervene if the existence of the monarchy in Portugal were seriously threatened, which did not appear to be the case at present. Maria, in fact, was guaranteed as much authority as the Whigs proposed to leave the sovereign in England.

The king of the Belgians then made Palmerston a remarkable proposal. Would England lend him transports to send a Belgian army to Portugal? No; England would not lend so much as a punt. All this is unedifying. The queen of Portugal having sworn on the crucifix to observe the constitution, straightway begs for foreign troops to kill her people and enable her to break her oath; the king of the Belgians, seated himself on a revolutionary throne, is willing to help her by pouring out the blood of his subjects in a quarrel in which they have no possible concern.¹

In extenuation it may be urged that as the price of his assistance, Leopold proposed to demand one of the Portuguese colonies on the west coast of Africa; this project anticipating the one realised by his son fifty years later.

Disappointed of her foreign bayonets, her seventeen-years-old majesty devoted herself to sulking in her palace, and to impeding the action of her own ministers. When one of them, Manoel Passos, prophesied that one day his highness would be thankful for the revolution, Ferdinand answered, "I detest it and shall always detest it, for all the people's grievances could have had legal redress under the charter." Having been removed from the supreme command, he took leave of the army with references to the glorious charter of Dom Pedro "trodden under foot on September 9," which, he was confident, must have been sufficient for the happiness of Portugal.

Encouraged by Van de Weyer, the royal pair busied themselves in stirring up discord among their sub-

¹ Goblet, "Etablissement des Cobourg en Portugal."

jects. The doughty Marshal de Saldanha, the hero of the civil war, promised to put himself at the head of a chartist insurrection. Instead of waiting for him, Maria and Ferdinand one morning in November drove off to Belem, dismissed the ministers, and announced the abrogation of the constitution. Success seemed assured, when the assassination of an ex-minister suddenly paralysed the chartists with terror. Her majesty's guard fled headlong, Ferdinand frantically pursuing them sword in hand. Hearing the tramp of the national guard, the queen screamed for help. A force of English marines was landed, but before it was withdrawn the constitution of 1822 had once more been promulgated, this time with the ministers' promise that it should be submitted for revision to the next cortes.

The failure of this attempt filled the palace with gloom, and brought down upon its authors the people's contempt. Van de Weyer left Lisbon for ever, and returned to his old embassy at London. On the wall of the palace some one scrawled the lines,

“ Dom Fernando via viajar,
A Rainha esta a chorar,
A Infanta a rezar,
E Dom Miguel a chegar.”

[“ Dom Fernando goes away,
The queen begins to cry,
The Infanta starts to pray,
And Dom Miguel draws nigh.”]

The prince did not go away, but braved the scorn of his wife's subjects. In the narrow streets of the capital he narrowly escaped the contents of a bucket. On another occasion a fellow accosted him with the inquiry, “ How goes it, Jozé Nabo ? ” (the Portuguese

Simple Simon). Riding one day across the Rocio square, he leaped a post. The bystanders affected to believe he was a madman, and called for him to be removed to an asylum. A Frenchman threw a stone at him with intent to wound. The queen's coachman was shot at because he was an Englishman and had to be discharged. In February, finally, the English admiral commanding the station issued an appeal to the English residents not to approach the queen and the prince lest they should be compromised in the eyes of their subjects.

Meanwhile, the cortes had met and had revised the constitution. The crown was granted the right of absolute veto, and a second or upper legislative chamber was constituted. These modifications should have satisfied the court and dispelled her majesty's fears. Divisions, however, among the Septembrists encouraged her to make another bid for wider authority. The Chartist rising, engineered by Saldanha, came off in July. It was crushed by the government, and the ringleaders escaped across the frontiers. The royal conspirators lost heart. Maria, who expected before long to become a mother, craved for repose; and even Dietz counselled Ferdinand to accept the constitution and to bow to the inevitable for a time at least.

From this hopeless and (for the nation) most hopeful mood they were roused by the arrival of a new envoy from Brussels, General Goblet. This officer had served under Napoleon and Wellington, and latterly under the king of the Netherlands, who persisted in regarding him as a common deserter; he stood high in his new master's favour, and by accepting office

in 1832, had enabled him to force Belgium into submission to the London conference. The experiences of Van de Weyer ought to have satisfied Leopold that the Portuguese would not tolerate any foreign interference ; instead, full of solicitude, we are told, for his unhappy nephew, he entrusted Goblet with the special mission of "reviving the energy of the court of Lisbon and restoring the authority of the Crown." The general endeavoured to obey these orders with a true soldier's unscrupulousness. He admits the activity and intelligence of the Septembrist ministers and is full of admiration for their chief, Sà da Bandeira. He observes that the government of Portugal represented the reign of talent, which he held to be the intermediate stage between the sovereignty of privilege and that of numerical majorities ; and this ideal system of rule he endeavoured to subvert in order to extend the authority of a girl and boy whose united ages amounted to forty-eight years.

What use the young Maria proposed to make of her power, whither she intended to lead her people, were questions the general never seems to have asked himself. He was no doubt right in believing that the illiterate masses had a great deal more sympathy with the queen than with her more enlightened ministers. That would be true of other countries than Portugal, where monarchy is too often broad-based on the people's mediocrity. The tendency of representative government, till it is captured by the party wire-pullers and lawyers, is to let talents rise to the top ; and the inert human mass underneath looks to the sovereign to protect it from its natural leaders. The prohibition of bull-fighting by the Septembrist

ministry, for instance, was an act as little acceptable to the Portuguese people as would be the suppression of such atrocities as fox-hunting to our squirearchy.

But this deep-seated sympathy between queen and people cut away the last excuse for Goblet's mischievous meddling. He admits that the nation was inalienably loyal to the sovereign, and then declares that her existence was jeopardised by the continuance of a liberal constitution. The loyalty of the Portuguese—not to call it by another name—seems sufficiently demonstrated by their maintenance upon the throne of an entirely useless young lady who spent her leisure intriguing with foreign courts and ministers against her own government.

The Belgian emissary had some difficulty in rousing Ferdinand and Dietz from their despondency. "It is all very well to counsel force," complained his highness, "but we know where that landed us at Belem." However, the general did not recommend the use of force. He was ingenious in suggesting plans by which the cabinet might be weakened and disorganised. He censured the prince for hesitating to dismiss the governor of Lisbon at the request of a single minister. He persuaded the queen to leave ministerial vacancies open, to carry on a policy of passive resistance. In all this he had the support and goodwill of the English representative, of whom, by the way, Dietz was particularly jealous. He blames Bois-le-Comte, the French minister, for his opposition to their manœuvres, and for his frank adhesion to the government to which he was accredited.

The general appears to have been blissfully un-

conscious of the impropriety of such conduct in a foreign representative. In fact he seems to have interpreted his instructions with a too military exactness, and certainly eclipsed his master in zeal for royalty. Writing to him in October 1837, King Leopold regrets the failure of Saldanha's revolt, but thinks the crown may outwear the vacillations of the revolutionaries by a certain stability of purpose; "there is no constitution so vicious (he continues) that it does not offer, in firm and prudent hands, resources which should not be neglected. Abstain for a time from all thoughts of a counter-revolution, and be assured that the action of time, if slow, is all-powerful. In ten years' time the king and queen of Portugal will still be young sovereigns, and what they will obtain spontaneously from the country by the force of circumstances will be much more substantial than what can be gained by a sudden effort."

On the 28th of the same month, his majesty again warns his zealous envoy not to attempt anything by force of arms, and to remember that the things necessary to constitute a monarchical government must be achieved by constitutional means. He urges the queen to turn her attention to the science of government and support whole-heartedly any measures which tend to the good of the country. In short, Leopold, while lamenting the queen's want of power, advises her to settle down to business as a constitutional sovereign and to end the turmoil.

Before these letters were written, the birth of a son to Maria and Ferdinand had strengthened their position, and disposed them more towards the moderation of the king than the policy of his envoy. Ferdi-

nand was given the royal title, and, obeying his uncle's instructions, cultivated the friendship of the aristocracy. The young man was at last learning wisdom. Sà da Bandeira was learning the ways of courts at the same time, and for all his political creed, became very sympathetic with the queen. Even Goblet relaxed his pestilent activity when he perceived that the Septembrists had settled down into a steady-going liberal party. There seemed to be no necessity to keep Ferdinand in leading strings any further; and at the end of July 1838 the Belgian diplomatist sailed for home, rather glad at the triumph of the party which a soldierly fidelity to the Coburgs had urged him to combat.

He was mistaken, however, in supposing that the peace which obtained in Portugal was anything but a lull in the tempest.

CHAPTER VIII

THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND'S CONSORT

AMONG the descendants of Ernest the Pious, as in the fairy tales, the greatest good luck always went to the younger sons. Ernest, Leopold's eldest brother, stayed at home, and died, like his father, merely duke of a petty German state. The crown of Greece slipped, as we know, from his grasp, as from his brother's; but for this loss he was in some degree consoled by a substantial increase in his dominions. The territories of Duke Frederick IV. of Gotha-Altenburg, on his death without children, in 1825, were distributed among the collateral Saxon houses. Altenburg went to Hildburghausen, but Ernest of Coburg exchanged Saalfeld for Gotha—a much more important state than that which he had hitherto ruled. So strong was parochial feeling in those days that the people of Gotha dreaded coming under a *foreign* yoke; and seem, like larger nationalities, to have been so stupid as to prefer a bad native government to a good foreign one. Ernest had already granted a constitution to Coburg, but the Gotha folks had no wish to benefit by it, and the tiny states continued to be politically distinct till after the establishment of the German empire.

The hand of a Russian grand-duchess having been

denied to him, Ernest had married, on July 31, 1817, Louisa, the niece of the last duke of Gotha and only daughter of his predecessor, Duke August. She was not yet seventeen years old—so early did girlhood come to an end among royal folks in our grandfathers' days. To judge from her letters, she seems to have been very much in love with her suitor, in rather the German school-girl fashion, and to have been vexed at the appearance of any one better-looking than he. She was a lively, impressionable girl, inclined to "gush," full of enthusiasms, ideals, and notes of exclamation. Her husband's sisters she discovered to be angels, his nephews, *wunderschön*. These ecstasies did not last long beyond her wedding. In the first two years of her married life she bore her husband two sons, Ernest and Albert, and then her love for him began to wane. Which of the two, if either, was to blame, we do not know; being neither lawyers nor journalists we have no wish to inquire. The people of Coburg, who loved the duchess and did not like to blame the duke, attributed their estrangement to the wiles of Maximilian von Szymborski, adjutant to his highness. It is difficult to see what object this officer can have had in separating the ducal pair, but he was a convenient scapegoat.

On August 28, 1824, the good people of Coburg determined to reconcile their highnesses by main force. The duchess had gone to Rosenau, one of the ducal country seats. A rumour spread that she proposed to take refuge with her stepmother at Gotha. A deputation of townsfolk waited upon her, accordingly, and besought her to return to the little capital. She not very gladly consented: men har-



ERNEST I., DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA.

nessed themselves to her carriage, and amidst frantic rejoicings she was drawn home to the castle. The duke, however, was with his mother and sons at his little hunting-lodge of Retschesdorf, about half a mile from the town. Thence he was persuaded with the utmost difficulty by his too fond subjects to come back with them to Coburg. With a wry smile he appeared with his consort on the balcony, to the immense satisfaction of the domesticated Thuringians.

It only remained now to kill the worm in the bud, and this the people did most effectually. They stormed the house of the luckless Szymborski, and forced him to take refuge in the castle. Neither the admonitions of the duke, the entreaties of the clergy, nor the threats of the troops could disperse them till they were satisfied that the detested adjutant had been smuggled out of the ducal residence and put across the frontier. Then, having, as they thought, firmly reunited husband and wife, they dispersed with cheers, to refresh themselves with copious draughts of the justly famous Coburg Brew.

These well-meant and drastic methods of promoting home life in high places altogether failed. Only three days after the end of the disturbances, the good burghers spelled out to each other in blank amazement the announcement in the court gazette that the duchess Louisa had gone to St. Wendel, in her husband's principality of Lichtenberg. She never returned—never saw again her Thuringian home or her bonny little sons. Eighteen months later her marriage with the duke was dissolved at Coburg, with the facility extended by the lutheran church to princely sinners; and on October 18 of the same

year, 1826, she took for her second husband a youth of twenty-two years, Count Alexander von Pölzig. Their short married life was clouded by the duchess's longings for her children and her kindred. To Stockmar she wrote, begging him to recall her to the mind of Prince Leopold. "I should not like to think he had forgotten me." Often enough the pain of such separations lies not in severing the bond itself, but in cutting also the ties which depend upon it.

Louisa's health rapidly declined. In February 1831 she went to consult a specialist in Paris. At the beginning of March, while witnessing Taglioni's dancing, at the Opera, she fell back fainting, and was carried to her hotel in the rue de la Paix. The doctors hastily convened pronounced upon her sentence of death. She lingered six months longer. On August 1 she wrote her will. The happiness she had known with her second husband, she declared, abundantly compensated her for the shortness of her life. She desired to be buried close to his permanent abode, and asked that should he alter this, her body should be moved also. On August 30 she died unconscious, in the thirty-first year of her age. Her last wishes were disregarded. She was buried first at St. Wendel, and again in 1860 in the mausoleum of Coburg. Her second and beloved husband died in 1884, at Schmölln, in the grand duchy of Saxe-Altenburg.

Ernest, the duchess's elder son, was born at the Ehrenburg at Coburg, on June 21, 1818, Albert, his brother, at Rosenau, on August 26, 1819. The boys were named, of course, after the founders of the two great branches of the Saxon's house, whose romantic

abduction by Kunz never failed to interest and excite the imagination of their youthful namesakes. Albert was born only three months after his future wife, Victoria, and the two were thus bracketed together in the cradle. "The little fellow is the pendant to the pretty cousin," wrote his grandmother, the dowager-duchess of Coburg. It was this lady who took charge of the two princes after the divorce of their parents, though we are told that they were objects of scarcely less affection and interest to their mother's stepmother, the duchess of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. Both princes seem to have been very well satisfied with the result of this grandmotherly government.

However, at the ages of four and five they were proud to be transferred to the custody of a male tutor, one Florschütz of Coburg. This preceptor appears to have counteracted in a measure the conservative influences of their father's court, while another professor, Bretschneider, instilled in them notions of religion, adjusted, as far as was possible, to the needs of princes and the ideas of modern men. The lads seem to have been troubled with religious scruples early in their teens, but at last determined to remain faithful to the evangelical church.

His English biographer, to please the British public, describes Albert as instinctively devout—"a description," comments his brother, "which fitted him even less than me." The boys were very far from being prigs, and it is evident that their elders were relieved when the ordeal of confirmation had been safely passed through. Their uncle, Leopold, wrote them a letter full of good advice on that occasion. They had

already visited him in his new kingdom, and had inspected the outposts of the Belgian army at the time of the siege of Antwerp. From Belgium the brothers came back liberals and revolutionaries; but their ardour was soon cooled by a visit to the court of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, which duchy was then, as it is now, an oasis of mediævalism. They next made their bow to the king of Prussia at Berlin, and were accorded a frosty welcome at Vienna. With their Kohary cousins they made excursions into Hungary and Moravia, and in the spring of 1836 bade a sad farewell to Ferdinand, when he departed to join his unknown royal bride.

An equally brilliant and less perilous alliance was dreamed of for one of them by their farseeing uncle. It was plain that the princess Victoria must, before long, succeed her aged uncle on the throne of Great Britain. King Leopold could think of no one better fitted to share her responsibilities than her cousin Albert. The lad's father at first thought that Ernest, possibly on account of his sporting instincts, would be more to the liking of the English people; and Stockmar, though he admitted that the younger prince had an English look about him, preferred to suspend his judgment till both brothers had passed some months at Brussels under his and their uncle's observation.

To assist her brother's designs, the duchess of Kent, in April 1836, invited the duke and his sons to visit her at Kensington Palace. This proposal aroused the ire of old William IV., who detested his sister-in-law, and had repeatedly protested against her making progresses about the kingdom, and jealously

keeping her daughter away from his influence. He had no liking for Leopold, whom he roundly abused at his table for not drinking wine, and he was determined to thwart his pretty obvious plans. He at once invited the prince of Orange and his sons to come over, and declared that Victoria should marry one of them and nobody else. He talked of stopping the Coburg princes at their landing, and induced his ministers to hint to Leopold that their visit had better be put off.

The Belgian king was stirred by these manœuvres out of his usual calm, and on May 13 wrote to Victoria hoping that this tyrannical conduct would rouse her spirit, and asking why she should be kept "a little white slavey" at the pleasure of a king who had never spent a sixpence upon her. "I have not the least doubt," adds his majesty, "that the king, in his passion for the Oranges, will be exceedingly rude to your relations; this, however, will not signify much: they are your guests and not his, and will therefore not mind it."

They did not seem to mind, and his Britannic majesty so far unbent as to receive them at Windsor. He seemed to Ernest, as to most people, an unimportant old fellow. Neither the princess nor her cousins were, of course, aware of the real object of this visit. Victoria pronounced the princes to be "delightful young people." "Albert," she writes to her uncle, "is extremely handsome, which Ernest certainly is not, but he has a most good-natured, honest, intelligent countenance." These expressions encouraged Leopold to disclose his project, which was approved by her royal highness. It was love at first

sight. Writing to her uncle on June 7, she thanks him for the prospect of great happiness he has secured her in the person of "dear Albert," who delighted her in every way, and "possessed every quality which could make her happy." She begs Leopold to take care of the health of one so dear to her, and hopes that all will go prosperously with this matter of so much importance to her.

The unsuspecting object of her youthful affections had meanwhile gone on to Paris, where he was kindly received by Louis Philip. There was some talk of a match between his brother and the princess Clementine, which, to the young man's disappointment, came to nothing. The brothers stayed at Brussels, where they were instructed in the mysteries of constitutional government, till April 1837, when they were sent to the university of Bonn. There they learned of the accession of their cousin to the throne of England.

Leopold promptly sent Stockmar over to support and advise the girl-queen, and no doubt to keep alive her interest in Prince Albert. Victoria's position was not easy at the outset of her long and prosperous reign. Her predecessors had dragged the crown through the mud, the people were plunged in ignorance and misery, the aristocracy were stupid and profligate. The whigs were in office, and Victoria's old friendship with them earned for her the hate of their opponents. Neither of our great political parties ever scruples to throw overboard cross and crown when these cease to be its tools. "Her majesty," said Mr. Bradshaw, a tory member of parliament at a public meeting, "is queen only of a

faction, and is as much a partisan as the lord chancellor himself."

Officers in the army listened approvingly to denunciations of their youthful sovereign. If the crown is not on our side, away with it! was the cry of these old-fashioned conservatives. "The tories do everything they can to make themselves odious to me!" complained Victoria. Some of them did more: they plotted, with the orangemen of "loyal Ulster" to dethrone her and make her uncle, Ernest Augustus of Hanover, king. The whigs, with equally interested motives, proclaimed their boundless loyalty and devotion, and O'Connell spoke of arming half a million Irishmen in her defence. Her majesty possibly doubted the sincerity of these protestations, for in after years she appears to have forgotten the friendliness of Ireland as completely as the insults of the conservatives.

In spite of partisan rancour and her new-found responsibilities, the girl thoroughly enjoyed those first years of sovereignty. She had not forgotten Albert, and was indeed constantly reminded of him by Stockmar and her beloved governess, Baroness Lehzen; but though old enough to reign, she considered herself too young to marry. She discontinued writing to her cousin, and proposed that Stockmar should break him in to her liking. He ought to improve his English, she told her uncle, and must get more experience and self-reliance.

In March 1838 Leopold saw his nephew, and told him that the queen of England was disposed to marry him when his education was completed. The youth was not less practical than the maiden. He looked

at the question (we read) from its most elevated point of view ; he considered that troubles were inseparable from all human conditions, and that, therefore, if one must be subject to plagues and annoyances, it is better to be so for some great and worthy object than for trivial and paltry ends. This does not seem to us the most gracious way of accepting a young lady's hand, but we quite agree that the position attached thereto was worth a good many plagues and annoyances. " But," continued the sagacious suitor, " to submit to the delay imposed, I must have a certain assurance to go upon. If after waiting, perhaps, for three years, I should find that the queen no longer desired the marriage, it would place me in a ridiculous position, and would to a certain extent ruin all my prospects for the future."

There is no opening, it would seem, for a jilted prince. Leopold thought his nephew's representations most reasonable, and so in after years did Queen Victoria. At the moment, however, she was too busy about her approaching coronation to give the assurance required ; and Albert and Stockmar started without it on a tour through Italy.

On his return to Coburg in May 1839 the mentor of princes reported favourably of his pupil, but complained of his indolence and want of interest in political matters. He also recommended him to drop the stiff Coburg manner, and to make himself more at home with women. Neither the prince nor his elders were easy in their mind, for there were a good many pretenders to the queen's hand, and among them the irrepressible Duc de Nemours. Louis Philip indeed took his son's chances so seriously that

Leopold kept Albert's candidature a secret from all the Orleans family except his wife, Louise.

In July the Belgian king asked Victoria if she would receive another visit from her cousin. In her reply she confessed to a great repugnance to change her state, and hoped that Albert clearly understood that they were not betrothed. However, when Albert appeared at Windsor on October 10, she fell in love with him once more. He was determined that she should make up her mind regarding him, though it must be a ticklish task to extract a proposal of marriage from a young lady. He succeeded. Victoria on the 15th wrote a very pretty, loverlike letter to her uncle, informing him of the engagement, which she announced at the same time to Lord Melbourne, her beloved counsellor and prime minister. The Coburg brothers stayed at Windsor a month longer, and on November 23 the queen notified her approaching marriage to the privy council. "It must have been a nervous thing to do," remarked the duchess of Gloucester. "It was a much more nervous thing when I proposed to Prince Albert!" replied her majesty.

The tories immediately began to make things unpleasant for the future bridegroom. They declared that he was a radical, an infidel, and a papist, and that the queen ought to have married the prince of Orange or Prince George of Cambridge. They discovered that Albert's cousins were catholics, and that Leopold's children were to be brought up as such. It was peculiarly hard that the prince should be suspected of infidelity to a faith for which his ancestor had forfeited his birthright; yet even the

duke of Wellington blamed the ministers for not having described him as a protestant in the speech from the throne. "It is curious," wrote Victoria to her betrothed, "to see those who, as tories, used to pride themselves upon their excessive loyalty, doing everything they can to degrade their young sovereign in the eyes of the people."

These champions of church and state in their contempt of the girl-queen far surpassed the bitterest of so-called socialistic demagogues. Those interested in the history of this remarkable party would do well to read a satire entitled "The German Bridegroom," published at this time. It is a clever piece of invective abounding in allusions to "England's fat queen," "the hoyden sovereign of this mighty isle," and to "Saxe-Coburg's pauper prince," who exchanged "the dozen cow-boys who composed his court," for the "bestial gambols in Victoria's court." The *honourable* and anonymous satirist refers with disgust to the bridegroom's moustache, but bids his countrymen have no concern about his religion :

"The youngster's faith is made of easy stuff,
Ready to turn and pliable enough;
No bigot he, to one or t'other creed—
Saxe-Coburg owns no martyrs in her breed."

The writer had probably never heard of Frederick the Magnanimous. In comparing the self-indulgence of the queen with the poverty of the working-classes, he affects sympathies strangely at variance with those professed on less urgent occasions by the recognised leaders of his party. But any stick was good enough to beat the Coburg with.

As Lord Melbourne might have expected, his

proposal to endow the prince with £50,000 a year was furiously opposed in parliament. The amount on amendment was reduced to £30,000. Anticipating modern methods, his political adversaries had some years before endeavoured to ruin the prime minister's reputation by involving him in a divorce suit, but he was magnanimous enough to tell Stockmar that the prince must not be irritated against the tories, as the extreme radicals were quite as much to blame in this business as they. There was no need to tell Stockmar this, as he was a tory himself at heart, and was most anxious to make Albert one likewise.

The bridegroom was sorely dejected at the attitude of the English parliament and people. He was hungry for the royal title; and a bill to give him precedence next after the queen had to be withdrawn by the English government. It was deemed inexpedient even to make him a peer, and Victoria rather pointedly reminded him that she was sovereign and meant to remain so. "Albert really needed my sympathy," his brother tells us, "on his way to England before the marriage. We travelled first to Brussels with our father, where a solemn reception of the royal consort of England took place, after which we set out for Calais. An English squadron awaited us. We had a stormy passage, and it exercised a depressing influence even on those who were not inclined to superstitious misgivings. At length, arrived at Dover, our passage was like a triumphal progress. In London, however, an accident spoiled the ceremonial, and the welcome prepared by the people. The bridegroom, in the most incomprehensible manner, was driven through side streets,

while the people vainly awaited him in another part of the city."

On February 10, 1840, Victoria and Albert were married in the chapel of St. James's palace. "I do not think it possible for any one to be happier or as happy as I am!" wrote the new-made wife to her uncle next day. Her husband assuredly was not. Connubial raptures did not blind him to the ambiguity of his position or to his strangeness in a strange land. He was loath to let his father and brother depart. At the conclusion of some comments on English ways and sights, he turned wistfully to Ernest, saying, "When you are gone I shall have no one with whom I can speak openly about these things. An Englishman cannot grasp or understand such matters, and will only see in my comments the foreigner's arrogant desire to blame."

Ernest himself doubted whether he had not more sympathy than his brother with the English character; and he was not without misgivings as to his future. Stockmar was exceedingly busy about the prince, coaching him in his new duties, advising, lecturing, exhorting. The excellent baron intervened soon after to save him from another snub and the government from another defeat. As there was promise of an heir, Melbourne introduced a bill into parliament to make Albert regent for his own child should the mother die in its infancy. The tories at once threatened trouble, and the queen's uncles, the dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, prepared to assert their rights to a share in a joint regency.

Stockmar, with great good sense, approached Sir Robert Peel, the conservative leader, and prevailed on

him to abandon his opposition to the measure; so that it passed both houses of parliament, his aged highness of Sussex alone objecting. It was Stockmar's policy to keep the crown above the heads of the warring factions, and as these factions seldom expressed the voice of the nation or of a large part of it, there seemed to be no harm in their settling their differences outside parliament instead of in it.

Stockmar was also able to bring about a better understanding between the young husband and wife, neither of whom, so Ernest tells us, was very willing to yield to the other at the start. It was not in those first weeks of her married life that the queen learned to speak of her consort as her lord and master, or exhibited that wifely submissiveness for which she was afterwards remarkable. Her former governess, Baroness Lehzen, was suspected by the prince's friends of encouraging her to exclude him from her counsels, in order to preserve her own ascendancy the longer. The same lady retained control of the privy purse and of several departments of the royal household. "The difficulty is that I am only the husband, and not the master in the house," wrote Albert within three months of his wedding. Stockmar remonstrated on his behalf with Melbourne, who promptly advised the queen to discuss all topics, political or domestic, with her husband. For the control of the household, his royal highness had to wait till the departure of Lehzen for her native Hanover, over two years later.

With Melbourne's approval, the prince soon, however, secured unlimited influence over the young queen. He became the real power behind the throne, and was wisely content with the reality of

authority. Victoria had always been swayed by somebody—by her mother, by her uncle, by her governess, by her prime minister—and Melbourne was unfeignedly glad, now his parliamentary career was closing, that his influence should be transferred to a disinterested and devoted adviser. Knowing how much the queen had been attached to him, he was especially anxious that the prince should wean her from any undue preference for his party. It was Albert's task to prepare his wife for intimate contact with the faction which had made itself so disagreeable to her.

The whig ministry was turned out on August 28, 1841, and a conservative cabinet was formed, under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel. As this statesman had been largely responsible for the limitation of Albert's civil list, he rather dreaded their first interview; but he found that the queen's husband bore no resentment for the injuries done to the prince of Coburg, and he pronounced him to be "one of the most extraordinary young men he had ever met with."

The prince certainly displayed extraordinary tact in a difficult position. According to the English constitution, he was still just the prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha: the sage framers of that remarkable fabric of precedents, anomalies, and sheer nonsense, had never contemplated the existence of the husband of a female sovereign. As a foreigner, he was regarded by the mass of the English people with vague distrust and contempt; as a Coburg, by the tories, with open dislike and jealousy. His fixed policy was to win the respect of the nation for royalty in the person of his wife and himself. Surfeited, in the

latter years of his widow's reign, with the negative virtues, we were tempted to cry like Lord Melbourne, "This damned morality will be the ruin of us"; but the vice of Albert's generation was as narrow, ugly, and illiberal as the virtue of a later day. Sir Mulberry Hawk and "fat Florizel" were no better worth preserving than Mr. Pecksniff.

Albert imitated neither libertine nor prig. He tried to raise the crown above the gutter. "It was not enough," says his official biographer, "that his life was pure and blameless. He took care to make it impossible for gossiping malignity to throw a semblance of suspicion upon it. He never stirred abroad unless in company with an equerry. He paid no visits in general society. All his leisure was given to visits to the studios of artists, to museums of science and art, to institutions for good and benevolent purposes, or to rides to parts of London where either improvements were in progress or were chiefly needed, especially such as might ameliorate the condition or minister to the pleasure of the labouring classes." Behaviour so circumspect won for him the esteem and in course of time the affection of the middle class, but it by no means endeared him to the aristocratic and fashionable world. Lady Flora Hastings had only a year or two before fallen a victim to the craze for purity in the court; it was long before the prince could convince society that he was not a hypocrite or a fanatic.

Mindful perhaps of his cousin Ferdinand's experiences, he very sensibly refused the supreme command of the army, which it was twice proposed to give him. He knew that the English would not like to see a

foreigner at the head of their troops, and that in case of civil disturbances, the father of the future king should not give the word to fire. It was, however, in connection with the army that he made his only innovation in English conceptions of morality. To him is mainly due the suppression of the practice of duelling, which was as late as 1843 more or less obligatory on military men. He suggested instead, the establishment of courts of honour, after the Bavarian model; but this proposal had too romantic a sound for the duke of Wellington. Englishmen henceforward ceased to defend their honour, real or conventional, with the sword, and found thumping damages in the courts a much more agreeable compensation for the loss of wife or reputation.

Next to securing the favour of the people, Albert aimed at cleansing the crown from any taint of political partisanship. In this he seems to have been fairly successful, aided as he was by his dislike of our party system, and no very profound respect for our institutions. His chief political mentors were Peel, from whom, says the historian of "Modern England," he learned nothing but good, and Stockmar, from whom he learned nothing but harm. He was less of a liberal in his early years than afterwards, which was perhaps fortunate, as he was thus able to correct his wife's aversion from the tories. Peel and Wellington recognised his useful qualities as readily as Melbourne, and the prime minister encouraged his interest in the development of art and education.

In the first four or five years of his married life he and the queen showed themselves freely in public and made progresses to different parts of the kingdom.



PRINCE ALBERT.

After W. C. Ross, A.R.A.

Albert insisted on going to Birmingham, which was then the stronghold of Chartism. To everybody's surprise but his own, the royal pair were enthusiastically received. Having sunned himself in the smiles of the horny-handed toilers, the prince immediately after made a bid for the applause of the gentry. He distinguished himself—if the expression may be used in such a connection—in the hunting-field at Belvoir. The Leicestershire bumpkins were very much astonished that a mere foreigner and one, moreover, of artistic tastes, should be able to ride straight or clear a hedge. After this they began to think more highly of his capacity for government, which in the minds of English people is still associated with a knack of catching balls, jumping ditches, and pulling live foxes to pieces. However, the prince was content with the honours he had won, and seldom afterwards appeared in the hunting-field—not, alas! from motives of humanity, as his readiness to shoot stags sufficiently attested.

But the confidence and affection of the English people was not easily to be won by the German prince. When, in consequence of delicate health, the queen deputed her husband to preside at court functions, a number of persons of rank conspicuously absented themselves. Three successive attempts were made to assassinate the queen, and it cannot be said that they roused any very emphatic indignation on the part of the public. It is only necessary to glance through the back files of *Punch* to learn in what little respect the court, for all its ostentatious purity, was held by educated Britons in the early forties.

CHAPTER IX

KING FERDINAND AND THE SPANISH MARRIAGES

HAVING assisted at his brother's wedding, Prince Ernest of Coburg-Gotha sailed southwards to Lisbon on a visit to his cousin, the King-Consort Ferdinand. The calm which had followed on the apparent reconciliation of the court with the Septembrists still prevailed, and King Leopold had ceased to direct the affairs of Portugal. Dom Miguel was almost forgotten, and Ernest was able to report that Ferdinand and Maria held an unshakable position. The king-consort appeared to have gained steadily in the esteem of the people, who on all occasions now treated him with an excess of courtesy. This was prudent, for the queen had entrusted the government entirely to him and devoted herself almost exclusively to her fast-increasing family.

Lisbon, says Ernest, had to thank Ferdinand for two things: the cleaning of the streets and the improvement of the police. Agriculture, at the suggestion of Leopold, he had sedulously encouraged. As to the constitution, the prince thought it unworkable, and expected it to rot and to fall to pieces, as the feudal institutions of Great Britain will one day do.

In temperament Ferdinand had much improved since his coming to Portugal. "The sharpness, fret-

fulness, and want of feeling he sometimes showed," says his cousin, "have entirely disappeared, and he has gained a certain amount of good nature and cordiality. He has told me with pleasure how great a difference he feels within himself, compared with the state of mind in which he came here, and how ashamed he is of his former faults and want of education and knowledge of the world." He might more fairly have blamed those who sent him to rule a state with so slender an equipment. "He can bring together a most charming circle, too, and chat with each member, sometimes in French, sometimes in fluent Portuguese."

The cousin from Coburg in the same letter extols the queen of Portugal for her absorption in her family, and gives an account of life at her court. "The state is about the same as that of every German sovereign prince, and the gentlemen are neither better nor worse than they are everywhere at court. The arrangements in the palace itself, such as table, cellar, service, are in good order, and are on exactly the same scale as at the Saxon court. The cooking is particularly good, as it bears a great resemblance to our beloved household fare; I have already been surprised to see dumplings. . . ." In the presence of these toothsome delicacies we have, according to a recognised authority, a guarantee of the royal personages' purity of mind. "At ten o'clock we sit down to breakfast; those who are present are the grand almoner, the chief masters of ceremonies, with the ladies-in-waiting, the chamberlain, the adjutant on duty, and the officers of the guard. It is a kind of luncheon, at which rice constitutes the principal dish.

“I generally spend the morning with Ferdinand and Donha Maria. The ministers often come to hand in some document. The queen receives no one alone, but every one comes to Ferdinand, who listens to them, arranges their affairs for them, and then only admits them to kiss the queen’s hand. When the person enters the drawing-room, Ferdinand always precedes him, and kisses her hand first. At two o’clock we generally ride out with the queen; we rarely return home before half-past five o’clock. Dinner is at seven, at which meal it is the exception for more persons to be present than at breakfast. After dinner people come to pay their respects, as they do at grandmamma’s at Gotha. In the evening one is quite free to go or to stay as one likes, which I look upon as a very pleasant arrangement for those who live at court. I play billiards almost daily with Ferdinand and several gentlemen.”

Of the diplomatic corps, young Ernest formed an unfavourable impression, especially of Lord Howard de Walden, the English minister. “A highly narrow-minded man. Ferdinand complains greatly of his stubbornness and want of insight. The ministers of state are, as I have discerned, partly for myself, partly from Ferdinand’s description, very mediocre creatures. But few amongst them are possessed of knowledge and understanding, and those of whom this may be said are mostly false, dishonourable, and very untrustworthy, besides being invariably poor.”

A princely spark of twenty-two may be forgiven the last sneer. Among the ministers was one, at any rate, whom Ferdinand did not despise. This was Antonio Bernardo de Costa Cabral, a man who had

begun life as the son of a small provision-dealer, and at the age of thirty-eight now held the ministry of justice. Like father Marcos, he had first identified himself with wildly revolutionary opinions. At the time of the revolt of the marshals he had clamoured for the severest measures against the vanquished chartists, and had spoken strongly against the creation of a second chamber and the royal prerogative. But the moment that he was raised to the office of governor of Lisbon, the effervescence of his liberalism subsided. He came within the spell of the court, and in return acquired a marked ascendancy over the queen and her consort. He was just the man that Ferdinand wanted—a native of the country, well versed in all the wiles of the Portuguese politician, bold and vigorous in execution, ambitious of personal power. He was a thousand times more useful than foreign diplomatists, who were swayed by their own timid cabinets and might at any moment be recalled or expelled.

Having come to an understanding, king and minister watched quietly for the swing of the pendulum. It came in January 1842, when the elections resulted in a chartist majority. Costa Cabral did not wait to re-establish the late constitution by parliamentary means. Though nominally the member of a Septembrist cabinet, he hurried to Oporto, declared for the charter, and with a force of six thousand men marched on the capital. The queen, at the request of her remaining ministers, of course disavowed and excommunicated the insurgents; but they knew that her heart was with them, and prepared to attack the city. On February 9 her majesty, upon the advice of the duke of Terceira, declared the charter of 1826

to be again the fundamental law of Portugal. Ten days later Costa Cabral was appointed minister of the interior, and the reign of "enlightened despotism" began.

The ministerial colleagues of the renegade revolutionary were mere dummies. Portugal for the next four years was ruled by a triumvirate—Hungarian, German, and Portuguese—King Ferdinand, the respectable Dietz, and Costa Cabral. Parliamentary institutions became a travesty, though there were not wanting bold orators to defend them. Abroad the minister was held chiefly responsible for the faults of the administration. At home people knew better. It was the pleasant-spoken king-consort who was at once the Mæcenas and the Cæsar of his wife's kingdom. "What is this force," demanded a deputy, "residing where we must not search too closely, which now condemns the ministry to inaction, now urges it to extremes? I deplore that the cabinet should never dream of resisting that power, for I could wish that aboard the Portuguese ship it was a Portuguese wind that filled the sails!"

Leaving his sturdy minister to parry such thrusts, Ferdinand paid assiduous court to the diplomatic body. Through Dom Antonio Drummond, the Brazilian minister, he was able to exercise an influence over the old Miguelist aristocracy. Drummond, according to a French writer, who visited Lisbon at this time, was a diplomatist of the old school. "Generous, and even extravagant, he seldom fails, by his persuasive tongue and his grand manner, to overcome the most stubborn opposition. M. de Drummond is an absolutist; he became such, if we are to believe

King Ferdinand and the Spanish Marriages 185

his own account, by seeing how little his old master, Dom Pedro, gained by his constitutions. Thus he makes an excellent missionary to the Miguelists—they may well give up a man if their adversaries give up their principles in exchange, thanks to M. de Drummond. Lisbon is to-day (1845) the only town in Europe where you still see some traces of the old-time diplomatic magnificence. In this respect the capital of Portugal preserves a privilege which cannot be disputed. In Paris, London, or Rome, you would look in vain for a political salon as animated as that of the countess of Gracia Real, where foregather the most influential foreign representatives in Lisbon.

“Madame de Gracia Real, now married to Senhor de Castro, a rich Portuguese, is a Spaniard of Cordova, who was very well known in London even before the fall of Dom Miguel. Obligated to-day to renounce the triumphs of youth, Mme. de Gracia Real is content with those of wit and understanding. She is not the first woman who has found consolation in politics for the departed illusions of her youth. Exiled from the great empire of fashion, the noble Cordovan accepted her fate. She quitted London, and during the years that remain to her, amuses herself by governing Portugal.”

Outside these brilliant circles, Lisbon appears to have been a dull, provincial place enough. The French traveller whom I have just quoted gives a graphic picture of the prevailing social stagnation. If you paid a visit, you had to knock till your arms ached before you could elicit a response, which then came to you in gruff, suspicious tones from behind a double set of barred gates. Having satisfied the

gloomy janitor of the mansion that you came with friendly intent, you awaited the arrival of the master, who conducted you to a cold chamber, hardly furnished, listened to you gravely, and showed you out again.

Almost the only recreation was the evening promenade—the Chartist resorting to one square, the Septembrists to another. Poverty and disease personified stalked the streets. It was usual to be accosted by well-dressed persons who in the most private manner solicited alms. If reproached for such want of self-respect, these elegant mendicants would reply that they had lost their fortune in the wars and had never been taught to earn a living. They would then resume their walk, and you might see them a moment later in the company of the great.¹

Ferdinand certainly profited by the power Costa Cabral had secured for him, to enliven the city and to increase its prosperity. He rivalled his cousin of England by his cultivation of the arts and industries. In 1838 he bought the ancient monastery of the Pena, on the wooded heights above Cintra, and adjacent to it he built in 1842 that beautiful palace which seems the creation of the age of knight-errantry and romance. To console the citizens of Lisbon for the loss of their bull-fights he built the theatre of Maria Segunda, and presided over a jury of artists to consider a scheme of decoration. He chose the design which had, unknown to him, been selected by the chief experts before his arrival; it was, however, the only one out of thirty-three submitted

¹ Xavier Durrieu, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February 1845.

which merited any attention at all. The Portuguese are not an artistic people, but the few men of talent they produced found in the king-consort a munificent patron. Of the ancient university of Coimbra he was proud to declare himself the protector. Nor was he less eager to extend his patronage to the new savings banks and the naval hospital. More open-handed than most of his kinsfolk, he voluntarily returned large proportions of his income to the impoverished treasury.

While such pleasant breezes filled the sails of the ship of state, the people, unlike their deputies, did not trouble to inquire as to the quarter whence they blew. It was no ill wind for Costa Cabral, at any rate, for he was able to purchase and restore the old castle of Thomar; and there he entertained his sovereign and her husband with a splendour that was rewarded with the title of count of Thomar. The nobility growled at the exaltation of the upstart; forgetful that upstarts have usually proved to be the best friends and ornaments of their order.

The star of the Coburgs was in the ascendant in the early forties of the nineteenth century. Nothing indeed succeeds like success. With one of them on the Belgian throne and two others the husbands of queens, the demand for Coburgs threatened to exceed the supply. The family now formed a tie between the French and English courts, and were thus particularly acceptable to Louis Philip.

Following close upon Albert's marriage, the duke of Nemours espoused Ferdinand's sister, Victoria of Coburg-Kohary. The much-coveted prince was at last removed from the marriage market. His

bride's uncle, it will be remembered, had taken the crown he had refused, and her brother and cousin the queens whom he might have wedded. The marriage was solemnised at St. Cloud on April 27, 1840, in the presence of the French and Belgian kings and the bride's father and second brother. Victoria was then eighteen years old. "Her excessive timidity," we are told, "alone clouded the radiance of her youth and beauty. It was long before the sound of her voice was known, she trembled so in speaking. It was longer still before her amiable qualities and her serious merits were discovered, so diffident was she of displaying them. The queen [Marie Amélie] was the first to appreciate her character, and to embrace her with an affection which increased every year."

The next year a new field was opened to the ambition of this fortunate house. Christina, the mother of the girl-queen, Isabella II. of Spain, had been forced to resign the regency and to seek an asylum at the capital of her uncle, the king of the French. To Prince Ernest, who, returning from Lisbon, had seen her at Barcelona on the eve of her abdication, she described herself as the most unfortunate woman on earth. She was also perhaps the cleverest. She had set her heart on marrying her daughters to two of the French princes. The old king, knowing that Europe would never consent to this, was able only to promise one of his sons for the younger girl; the queen, her sister, he suggested, might marry the duke of Cadiz or one of the Neapolitan Bourbons. Christina was disappointed. She had no fancy for his grace of Cadiz, the son of her detested sister, Luisa

Carlota. It was then that she remembered the prince whom she had met at Barcelona, whose brother had married Queen Victoria.

So far the sympathy of England had been with Espartero and the faction which had driven her from Spain ; it would be a great thing to have both the courts of London and Paris behind her—to ally her daughter with one who could command the support of England, France, Belgium, and Portugal.

In the year 1841, Stockmar tells us, the widowed queen hinted to the English court, through three separate channels, her desire for such a union. Ernest, she learned, was quite out of the question, presumably because of his close relationship to her Britannic majesty ; of the eligible Coburgs there remained only Ferdinand's youngest brother, Leopold, a mere lad, and he was too closely related through his sister to the French court, so Lord Palmerston thought. The projected match found no favour at Downing Street ; and Stockmar was not disposed to consider the young prince equal to the suggested part. In Spain itself, the scheme, when it became mooted, found a rather lukewarm supporter in Espartero, probably because he supposed it would be agreeable to his friends the English.

Louis Philip supposed as much, also. He was seriously alarmed by Christina's scheme. The Coburgs were, it is true, as closely connected with him as with the court of England, but their sympathies he believed to be rather English than French. Guizot, his prime minister, spoke apprehensively of this rapidly ascending house. The Saxon rue was overspreading every escutcheon in Europe, and tasted

bitter to the statesman. Yet the citizen king wisely resolved to identify the interests of the tribe as closely as possible with his own.

In April 1843 the houses of Coburg and Orleans were linked for the third time by the marriage of the king's daughter Clementine to August, the brother of Ferdinand of Portugal and the duchess of Nemours, rather against the will of the bridegroom's father, who had no faith in the stability of the French monarchy. Ernest, who had once been thought of as a husband for the princess, was present at the wedding with his wife, the Princess Alexandra of Baden, whom he had espoused a year before. Christina was also there, an honoured guest, and was introduced to the bridegroom's younger brother—Leopold himself in the flesh. The honeymoon was spent at the Portuguese court, where Ferdinand proudly exhibited his wife's temporarily obedient subjects. We may be sure that he also discussed Leopold's prospects with his father, who made one of the bridal party, and promised to help on an alliance so favourable to his house and to his adopted country.

In the meantime the artful Christina had been amusing herself with negotiations to marry her daughter to the eldest son of her old enemy and fellow exile, Don Carlos. It is worth noting that Queen Victoria, on August 13, 1843, wrote to Lord Aberdeen, who was now at Downing Street, strongly opposing this project—possibly because it would have spoilt the Coburg chances. Both schemes were definitely repugnant to the French court, while the English cabinet would not hear of Isabella marrying a prince of the house of Orleans.

King Ferdinand and the Spanish Marriages 191

When Christina broke off negotiations with Carlos and August, and Clementine paid a visit to Lisbon, Guizot made up his mind that England had determined to place a Coburg on the throne of St. Ferdinand. Louis Philip then hit on a means of relieving the apprehensions of both countries. The French ambassador proposed to Lord Aberdeen that her catholic majesty's choice of a husband should be limited to the house of Bourbon, the French branch alone being barred. His lordship demurred. "What right have we," he asked, "to limit the young lady's choice in such a matter?" "Then," retorted the Frenchman, "you cannot object to our duc d'Aumale." There was the crux.

In September a great family gathering took place at Eu, on the Norman coast. Victoria and Albert came to visit the French king and his family, among whom were August and his wife. The two prime ministers, who accompanied their sovereigns, seized the occasion to strike a bargain. The French proposal was agreed to. Louis Philip would decline the offer of the young queen's hand for any of his sons, and would endeavour to secure it for some other Bourbon prince; England bound herself to give no help or countenance to any suitor not of the blood of Henri Quatre. "And remember," concluded Guizot, "the reappearance of the prince of Coburg will mean the resurrection of the duc d'Aumale."

The queen-dowager of Spain was, of course, no party to this compact. Her ambassador in London insisted that an alliance with one or other of the two western powers was vital to Spain; and her dowager majesty, two months after the Eu conference, told

Henry Bulwer, when he was about to take up the British embassy at Madrid, that failing the duc d'Aumale, she must have Leopold of Coburg as a son-in-law. In March 1844 she was able to return to Madrid, and to exert direct pressure on her daughters. She was evidently so little eager to bestow them on their Spanish or Italian cousins that in November Louis Philip found it necessary to offer a bribe. If Queen Isabella would marry the Neapolitan count of Trapani, her sister, Luisa Fernanda, could have his majesty's fifth son, the duc de Montpensier.

"For God's sake don't let this prince escape us!" cried Christina. But her right-hand man, Narvaez, despised Trapani as a weakling, and could not see for the life of him why the queen should not marry Montpensier herself. The Spanish general was not in the least afraid of England, and knew that, once married, Isabella could not be severed from her husband by force of arms. The English would have to grin and bear it, and would not go to war merely to gratify their resentment. It seems understood that a victorious nation may not demand the dissolution of a marriage, though it may violently wrench thousands of people away from their natural allegiance and subject them to an alien yoke. The marriage tie, it is agreed, cannot be severed by the sword.

Louis Philip was not to be persuaded by Narvaez. If Trapani was out of the question, there were other Spanish and Italian Bourbons. He suggested Don Francisco de Asis, Christina's nephew. This young man was derided even by his own family, by whom he was familiarly called Paquita (Fanny). There

was such an absence of all that was manly about him that none thought of him as a husband, much less as a father. His brother, Enrique, was very much of a man, but then he was a decided radical—almost a republican. It was preposterous that the king of the French should expect Isabella to wed either of these impossible young men.

Christina's repugnance was so marked that on the occasion of Queen Victoria's second visit in September 1845, to the French royal family at Eu, Guizot hastened to extract a second disavowal of Prince Leopold's candidature from Lord Aberdeen, promising in exchange that the duc de Montpensier's marriage with the infanta should not be celebrated till Isabella had become a wife and a mother. The disavowed candidate meanwhile saw no harm in accepting the hospitality of his brother Ferdinand, within convenient distance of Madrid.

A new Portuguese envoy arrived at the Spanish court equipped with a splendour not seen since Manuel's day, and eloquently insisted on the common interests and sympathies of the two nations. Careless of the pledge given by England, Christina turned to our representative, bemoaning the tyrannical conduct of Louis Philip, and again declaring her preference for the German prince. Bulwer was Palmerston's man, and had no sympathy with the policy of Lord Aberdeen. He wanted to score off his French colleague, M. Bresson, and he would have been genuinely sorry to see any girl forced to espouse a mere marionette like Francisco de Asis. He suspected, too, that the match disapproved at Downing Street might be smiled upon at Windsor, and probably thought that

Leopold's visit to Lisbon had been sanctioned by the heads of his family."

The Portuguese minister to Spain, returning from a mysterious visit to Coburg, had seen Prince Albert in London, and did his best to encourage Bulwer's suspicions. "Had I been able to guide the Spanish court," admits our representative, "I should have tied its tongue and confined its endeavours to getting Prince Leopold to visit Madrid, when a marriage taking place suddenly with the approval of the cortes, and amidst the acclamations of the army, would have been irrevocable."

Having regard to the engagements of his government, he dared not go as far as this, but he did undertake to deliver a letter from Christina to the head of the Saxe-Coburg family. This was now Ernest, who had succeeded to the dukedom on the death of his father in January 1844. He had chosen this opportune moment to join his cousins at Lisbon. Her majesty informed him that she considered Prince Leopold the man most likely to reconcile her daughter's happiness with Spain's, and begged him to represent the match in a favourable light to Queen Victoria, who, she hoped, would endeavour to disarm the possible resentment of the king of the French. She was willing, of course, that the infanta should wed the duc de Montpensier.

The unlucky Bulwer, on reporting his action in this matter to his chief, found that he had fired a train of gunpowder. Lord Aberdeen, mindful of his promise at Eu, severely rated him, and without delay disclosed the whole transaction to Guizot. When Duke Ernest forwarded the queen's letter to Windsor,



MARIE II. DA GLORIA, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL.

After Sir Thomas Lawrence.

Albert replied, expressing regret that by his "inexplicable journey to the peninsula" he should have helped to excite the suspicion of France. England could give no sort of support to Leopold's suit unless it was with the consent of the French court. His royal highness admitted that the match seemed to be a good one for Spain, though the young queen's ugliness and the dangers that beset her throne might not render it very attractive to their cousin.

Duke Ernest, nevertheless, hesitated to return the queen-mother a positive refusal. He went over to England in June, and arrived in London on the eve of a change in the government. Bulwer's secret mediation had gone far to promote distrust between England and France, and Lord Palmerston's return to the foreign office did not mend matters. He was known to be the enemy of Louis Philip and the friend of Espartero, the fallen regent. Profiting by the bad impression his taking office made on the Spanish government, Bresson tried to woo Christina back to the French side. But she was hard to manage, changing or affecting to change her mind from day to day, now appearing to favour the Trapani match, at other times leaning towards Leopold. At last Bresson determined to take a leaf out of his rival's book, in order to settle the business. He considered that the English ambassador's perfidy (as he esteemed it) had released France from her engagements. On July 11 he promised Christina that if her daughter married a Bourbon prince, the infanta could marry the duc de Montpensier the same day—in defiance of the stipulation to the contrary made at Eu.

Christina at once closed with the offer. The

Bourbon prince must, she sighed, be the ridiculous Paquita, but this, on maturer consideration, she must have thought an advantage rather than the reverse, for she made sure he would not have a child and Louis Philip's grandchild thus becoming heir to the Spanish throne, she would have the support of France, tide what may. But if Bresson's proposal pleased her, it sorely vexed old Louis Philip. Never mind about Bulwer's want of faith—he would stick to his bond with England ; the marriages must not take place at the same time.

But, as if to justify his representative's manœuvre, at that very moment (July 19) Palmerston was penning a dispatch to Bulwer, in which he examined the merits of the competitors for the queen's hand, expressing the hope that she would marry Leopold and her sister Don Enrique. The Montpensier marriage, his lordship hoped, might be prevented. On August 3 he wrote : " If the marriage of Coburg to the queen could be effected with the full consent and concurrence of the Spaniards, and would not bring them into a bad understanding with France, especially if it was not to be followed by the marriage of Montpensier to the infanta, we, the English government, should see with pleasure a good cross introduced into the royal family of Spain. The best arrangement would be that Enrique should marry the queen and Coburg the infanta ; but the great object to be accomplished in the interest of England is to prevent the French prince from marrying either the queen or the infanta."

It will be remembered that Lord Aberdeen on behalf of the English government had promised to give

no support or countenance to the prince of Coburg's suit. It is difficult to see how, in fact, we could have done more for him short of kidnapping Isabella and marrying her to him on an English warship.

In thus breaking faith with France, our foreign secretary acted in direct defiance of the wishes of his sovereign and her husband.

On August 5, at Albert's dictation, the duke of Coburg at last replied to Christina. As head of the house, he politely declined the honour she had proposed for his cousin, in order not "to provoke the enmity of a neighbour whose concurrence or opposition would always be of such great weight." Palmerston at once became disgusted with the weak-kneed Coburgs. He knew, he told Bulwer, that they would never have the nerve to stand up to Louis Philip. As to Leopold, he wrote: "I have not seen the prince since he was here as a boy of twelve years old. But I know what his father is, I know what his second brother is, and I know what his sister the duchess of Nemours is. If all these high and distinguished persons were to put together all the energy and activity which they severally possess, it would fall far short of the quantity necessary to endow a great prince. They are, all of them, except the king of Portugal, below par. The chances are therefore against Prince Leopold being anything remarkable; and the best that can be hoped for from him is that he may turn out an ordinary man with not much less sense and judgment than the generality of mankind." His lordship continued, however, to think that this insignificant prince might suit the infanta, while the queen married Enrique. "In regard

to any other arrangements," he writes on August 17, "we do not clearly see our way."

Christina and Bresson did. Her majesty was exasperated by this talk of Enrique, who was the avowed enemy of her government; and though Palmerston had been careful not to proclaim his hostility to the French match,¹ it was thoroughly well known to Guizot. England had torn the treaty of Eu to shreds. Christina extracted from her most reluctant daughter her consent to her marriage with Francisco de Asis, and the hand of the infanta was given to the duc de Montpensier. On October 16, 1846, both marriages were solemnised one after the other.

In England the news of the double betrothal had roused a storm of indignation. In the columns of the *Times* and other newspapers, Louis Philip was called a swindler, a chevalier d'industrie, a double-dyed villain; *Punch* represented him as Fagin teaching his boys to pick pockets. The old king through the queen of Belgium attempted to explain and justify his behaviour to her Britannic majesty; but, though she was "from the first moment full of relenting and forgiveness," she was easily persuaded by Albert of her late ally's perfidy. In acknowledging Queen Louise's letter, she spoke in very decided terms of his conduct, and her friendship with the Orleans family was renewed only when they landed, two years after, exiles and suppliants on our shores. This unfair view of Louis Philip's action in this miserable business has been, strange to say, adopted by all English writers² since that day; though it seems only necessary to

¹ See his letter to Bulwer, August 16, 1846.

² Except by Lord Stanmore, in his "Life of Lord Aberdeen."

read Lord Palmerston's letters to perceive that his breach of the compact had altogether released France from her reciprocal obligations.

The collapse of his brother's pretensions must have been a bitter blow to the king consort of Portugal, who began sorely to need the alliance and support of the sister kingdom. The people had grown restive under Cabral's high-handed administration. Their anger, too, had at last been aroused against the foreign advisers of the court. The stolid German Dietz had become an object of universal execration. "Who is this brute that wears his hat in the royal presence?" demanded newspapers, whose editors really regretted that there was a royal presence at all. "If councillor Dietz does not at once quit the palace of the queen," threatened another journal, "the people of Lisbon will go themselves and drag him from the abode which is sullied by the presence of so vile and shameless a parasite."

Dietz shook with terror. Her majesty Queen Maria trembled not at all. Duke Ernest tells us that he sat with her at tea on the terrace at Belem while the band was playing the Gabriel valse, and on the other side of the river the thunder of guns announced a conflict between the forts and the insurgents. She paid no heed to the warning thunder, and conversed calmly on indifferent topics. Ferdinand looked grave. He knew that this was no mere riot and that the end of his patriarchal rule was at hand.

Lisbon was soon in insurrection. Costa Cabral "the Jonathan Wilde of politics," fled the country in disguise. A few weeks later, to the court's unspeakable relief, the marquis of Saldanha returned to

Portugal from Brussels. He found that a liberal ministry had been formed under the presidency of the duke of Palmella. The marquis stupidly recommended its dismissal and resort to a counter-revolution.

On October 6, 1846, he went to Belem, where he found the queen walking in the garden, accompanied by Ferdinand and his satellites, Dietz and father Marcos. "He answered their majesties that he had taken every step in his power to enable the ministerial change to be effected with safety; and that he was prepared at once to carry out their plans. He addressed her majesty as follows: 'Madame, it becomes my duty to tell your majesty that if I do not succeed or do not meet my death in the attempt, I shall inevitably be shot on the morrow, and your majesty will be driven from the country.'

"Dietz, on hearing this, immediately exclaimed, 'Oh, then, it is better to leave things as they are!' Upon this, her majesty, turning towards Saldanha, said, 'Send him to a nunnery,' and added, 'Sooner will I lose the crown than continue to remain insulted and calumniated day after day. If you deem it necessary, I am ready this instant to mount my horse and accompany you to the nearest barracks.'"

The dismissal of Palmella's cabinet set the whole country in a blaze. A manifesto was circulated, announcing the deposition of the queen and the substitution for her of her son. She was styled a vampire who desired blood and bones, a tigress, and a viper in the bosom of her people. Maria responded by appointing her husband to the command of the army. It was Saldanha, however, who did the actual fighting, and by his victory over the insurgents at

Torres Vedras on December 22, saved the capital. In other parts of the country the rebellion gained ground. Saldanha urged the queen to invoke the aid of England and Spain. Reluctant to do this, Ferdinand and Maria at first made efforts to patch up a compromise. The allies offered their mediation ; but in vain.

At the end of April, Sá da Bandeira with a September army captured Lisbon. The British and Spanish warships in the Tagus at once cleared for action and made ready to land their crews for the defence of the queen. Over a thousand prisoners were released from the gaols, and in her panic her majesty signed a decree dismissing Saldanha and his colleagues. The insurgents at Oporto refused all offers of a settlement and prepared to attack Lisbon. Their transports were stopped by the English admiral, Parker, while a Spanish force invested the city. By the efforts of the allies, a general amnesty was decreed, and on June 24 both sides laid down their arms.

Neither Maria nor Ferdinand had gained much in the opinion of their own allies. Palmerston protested with his usual bluntness against the cruel treatment of their prisoners of war, and insisted that they should be brought back from the penal colonies. In the English house of commons her most faithful majesty was so fiercely attacked that Queen Victoria sent her an apology. Maria replied that she never heeded such attacks, as she was aware that the British parliament usually met after dinner.

Saldanha was recalled to office, and Costa Cabral came back from Madrid. Poor old Dietz was sacrificed to popular resentment, or rather to Palmerston's

wrath. The English cabinet, like the press of London and Lisbon, laid all the blame on his shoulders. Even Ferdinand's cousin, Alexander Mensdorff, who was sent on a special mission to Portugal, condemned him ; and he found defenders only in King Leopold and Duke Ernest, who maintained that the English ambassador had made him the scapegoat of his own blunders and unpopularity. Of the jovial father Marcos, Palmerston could not get rid ; but with Dietz was removed from the palace the last personal representative of foreign influence.

To every one's surprise, except his own, things went on just as ill after his departure. The count of Thomar, having speedily recovered his influence at the palace, ousted Saldanha. In March 1850 the marshal was even dismissed from his post of chief aide-de-camp to the king-consort, which he had held for fourteen years. As the queen refused to part with Thomar, his rival appealed to arms. On April 9, 1851, Ferdinand put himself at the head of an army to crush his late lieutenant. On reaching Coimbra, his quarters were surrounded by students and citizens, who cheered for the marshal. He was compelled to wave his own plumed hat in the air in token of agreement.

It was clear that Saldanha had the country with him. Thomar, " whose words were sweet music in the queen's ear," again took flight. The marshal was asked to come to the palace, when all would be forgiven. " The king," one of his friends wrote, " is much to be pitied ; your excellency will not refrain from tears when you see him. I can vouch for his sincerity and good faith. If it were not for past experience, I might believe in

the attrition and contrition of *somebody else* [the queen]. None of those precautions must be omitted which will cut off every possibility of a relapse." These advices moved the stout-hearted soldier to mercy, and he returned in triumph to Lisbon. He was received with the utmost cordiality by her majesty and her consort, and was immediately appointed commander-in-chief and president of the ministry.

During the past fifteen years there had been fourteen insurrections of various importance in the constitutional kingdom of Portugal. The powers had lost patience, and Palmerston talked openly of forcing the queen to abdicate. Subdued by this threat, and removed from the influence of Dietz and Costa Cabral, her majesty sadly reconciled herself to constitutional courses. Portugal was now governed by Saldanha under a revised edition of the charter. Their majesties bore him no ill-will—Ferdinand, for that matter, was heartily sick of strife—and a chair was placed for him by their fireside every night. While Maria was busy with her embroidery and Ferdinand with his engravings, the veteran would expound his views on government and fight all his battles o'er again. This must have been a little tedious at times, more so perhaps than the drowsy hum of bullets to which the sovereign had so long been accustomed.

So passed two peaceful years. In November 1853 Maria da Gloria died, worn out by child-bearing and possibly unable to endure a peaceful existence any longer. Though only thirty-four years of age, she had given birth to eleven children, of whom seven survived her. To criticise her would be harsh and idle.

She was a queen because she was her father's daughter. She had received no training for her particular duties, and was confronted with the responsibilities of a kingdom at an age when most girls are still in short frocks. Despotic tendencies were in her blood, despotic traditions were in the air she breathed, and she could not have been expected to understand the new-fangled theories of her father. There is no need to make her the scapegoat of a silly system. The worst that can be said of her was that her reign cannot be taken as a good advertisement for the institution of hereditary monarchy.

CHAPTER X

EMPEROR, KING, AND PRINCE CONSORT

THE downfall of Louis Philip in February 1848 came as a rude shock to the believers in constitutional monarchy. By none was it beheld with more anxiety than by Leopold of Belgium, the son-in-law and neighbour of the fallen king, and indebted for his crown to the same revolution and the same principles. He saw his nephew August and his niece Victoria refugees with the rest of the Orleans family at his old home at Claremont; he heard a numerous party in France clamouring for the incorporation of the Walloon provinces with their republic.

The reactionaries and absolutists saw in this a righteous retribution for the abandonment by the self-seeking Coburgs of the cast-iron principles of the Holy Alliance. Leopold had been borne by the revolutionary tide on to a throne; he would surely be washed away with the ebb. These prophets forgot that Louis Philip had lost his crown by observing the letter but not the spirit of the constitution. Leopold, on the contrary, had refused at his instance to dissolve a liberal congress held in the town hall of Brussels; bowing to the will of the people according to the terms of his oath, he dismissed his unpopular advisers in June 1847, and entrusted their portfolios to Rogier and his liberal colleagues.

The wisdom of his attitude was at once demonstrated. On March 30 an expedition, equipped in Paris, with the connivance, it is alleged, of the minister of the interior, crossed the Belgian frontier near Mouscron, and proclaimed the republic. At the appropriately named hamlet of Risquons-Tout, the adventurers fell in with a mixed force of troops and peasants, by whom they were dispersed and disarmed, almost without bloodshed. At Brussels the citizens rallied round the king, and as he traversed the Place des Palais insisted on shaking his hand, one by one, so that two hours elapsed before his majesty could escape.

While reactionary kings and emperors were flying for their lives, while Berlin and Vienna, the very tabernacles of absolutism, were engulfed in the revolution, constitutional Belgium remained calm and stable. Brussels was the first refuge chosen by Metternich, the high priest of reaction, on his way from Austria to England. He congratulated Leopold and apologised for the hostility with which he had once regarded him.

"Belgium," wrote Victoria to her uncle, "is a bright star in the midst of dark clouds. It makes us all very happy." She ought not to have been very happy, for a spark from the French conflagration had set light to the damp straw of English radicalism. However, her majesty admitted that she felt as if she lived in a dream—a state in which she seems to have found herself when she saw her husband beside her, when she caught sight of one of her children, when she met Louis Philip at Eu, when she saw the new moon, and indeed when anything at all happened to interrupt the placidity of her existence.

The Chartist demonstration certainly faded away like a dream, but the rising in Ireland threatened to be a bad nightmare. That unfortunate island had been reduced by ill-luck and misgovernment to a state of wretchedness almost without parallel, of which we were pointedly reminded by the duke of Sotomayor when Lord Palmerston thought fit to lecture the Spanish government for its misdeeds.

Great Britain, of course, muddled through these isolated and ill-managed attempts at revolution, thanks mainly to the Englishman's intense dread of a conflict with armed police or military. Queen Victoria at times was very excited and indignant, and wanted the bad men who had caused the trouble to be severely punished; just as she thought that members of her own sex who aspired to equality with males should be well whipped. Albert talked no such nonsense, but seized every occasion to avow a possibly platonic sympathy with the working class. He had no hesitation in showing himself in public, and presided at a meeting to consider what might be done "for that class of our community which has most of the toil and least of the enjoyments of this world." He certainly said nothing very illuminating, and his economics were demonstrably unsound; but he persuaded a very large section of the people that he had their interest at heart and was no friend of oppressive legislation. It was well for Victoria that he stood forward as spokesman of the court.

The prince was more concerned for the land of his birth than that of his adoption in these troublous times. Germany was in a ferment. There was a unanimous cry from the people for unity, which was

heeded or not by the princes as it seemed to suit their individual purpose. There was a little revolution in Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, where Ernest promptly conceded a liberal constitution to his subjects. Stockmar, who represented the little duchy at Frankfort, was too busy to report to him and occupied himself with a scheme for the reconstruction of the fatherland. His plan was to create a German empire as at present existing, under the hereditary headship of Prussia, but with that state stripped of its individuality and constituting the immediate imperial territory, round which the lesser states would cluster. Albert, on the other hand, proposed that Germany, Austria included, should elect an emperor for life or for a term of years. The parliament at Frankfort did in fact offer the imperial crown to Frederick William IV., who refused it. He was universally condemned and despised for what was looked upon as an act of treason to the whole nation.

Duke Ernest, who had strongly urged him to accept the dignity, was at this time commanding the federal troops in Schleswig-Holstein. There he leaped forward in popularity by defeating the Danes at the battle of Eckernförde. Immediately after, he was startled to receive a letter from a well-known man, imploring him to put himself at the head of the national movement. "The thanks, the veneration, and the love of a great nation would be given you, and history would rank you among the first and noblest heroes"—so ran the appeal. In spite of this pressing and flattering invitation, Ernest preferred to live as he died—the much-loved sovereign of his ancestral states.

The sympathy of Queen Victoria during this period of turmoil was almost altogether with the forces of

reaction. She maintained with refreshing candour that she could not object to the Austrians coercing their Italian subjects into submission when she was coercing the Irish. Her respect for consistency was not, as is well known, shared by her foreign minister, Lord Palmerston, who extended the moral support and approval of the British government to every revolutionary movement in Europe, outside the limits of Great Britain. Her majesty was highly incensed, and though Albert was almost a revolutionary compared with his wife, he also thought that Palmerston had overstepped the boundaries of international courtesy and of ministerial responsibility. Perhaps unconsciously, he was induced to take this view by the minister's determined championship of the Danes in the very struggle in which his brother was engaged against them.

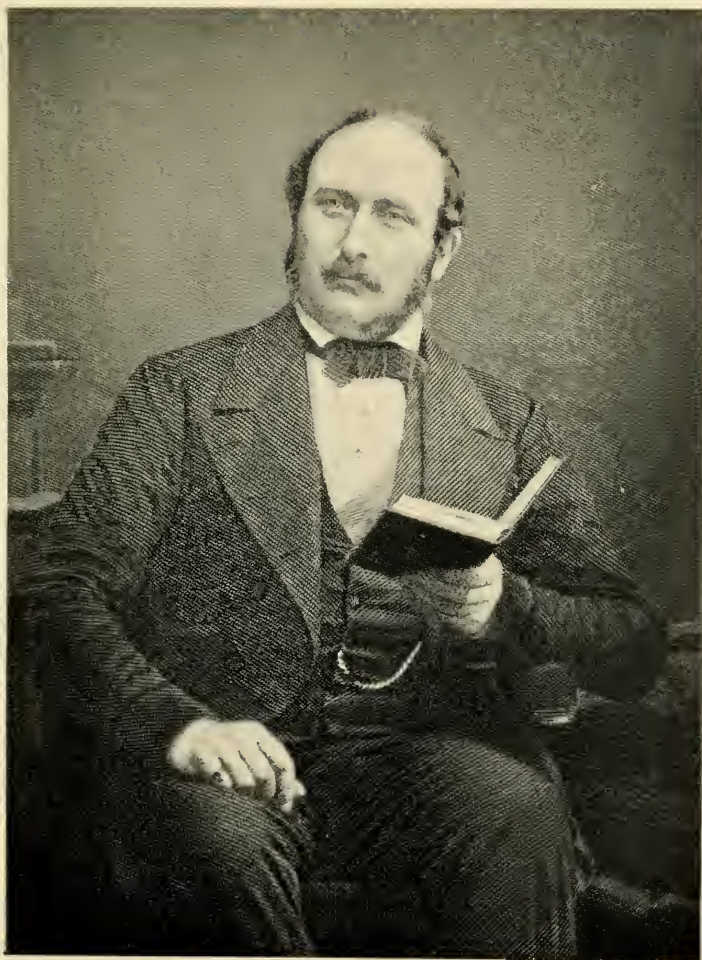
In 1849 the queen complained that no time was given her for the consideration of dispatches to foreign courts, and in the following year she addressed a memorandum to the premier, Lord John Russell, requiring that the foreign secretary should on all occasions distinctly state what he proposed in any given case, and that once she had given her sanction to a measure, it should not be arbitrarily altered by him. These instructions were communicated by Lord John to Palmerston, who in an interview with Albert, promised to observe them for the future.

The peace between the court and the foreign office did not last very long. An Austrian general named Haynau, who had made himself odious by flogging women at the cart tail in Hungary, chose to visit our shores and inspect the sights of London. Now-

adays he would probably command the respect of Londoners as a Strong Man and a loyal servant of his emperor ; but then he was looked upon as a brute, and when ill luck led him to Barclay's brewery, he was given a good drubbing by the draymen. Queen Victoria was very angry with her people, and Albert saw in this entirely justifiable assault " a foretaste of what an unregulated mass of illiterate people is capable." The general's behaviour had previously given the illiterate people a foretaste of what the high-born servants of an autocratic government are capable.

Palmerston in a letter to the queen condoned the outrage, and later on received addresses in which the Russian and Austrian emperors were with nice accuracy described as merciless tyrants and despots. Her majesty, protesting against this to Lord John, expressed the quaint belief that if she gave the Austrian emperor just ground for complaint, she would not add to her popularity with her own people. Her majesty might have believed this more of her subjects' grandchildren than of the England of 1850.

Oddly enough, however, it was by giving his countenance to the unconstitutional act of a military dictator that Palmerston brought about his own downfall. On December 2, 1851, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, president of the French Republic, had deluged the streets of Paris with blood, and seized the supreme power in the state. Upon his own responsibility the English minister signified his approval of this disgraceful counter-revolution to the French ambassador. Lord John required his colleague and subordinate to resign. In a letter to his brother three weeks after, Palmerston absurdly attributed his dismissal to the



PRINCE ALBERT AT THE AGE OF FORTY-TWO.

After a photograph by Silvy.

intrigues of the Orleans family, and the courts of Austria and Prussia. These had, he professed to believe, for a long time past poisoned the minds of the queen and prince against him. He was almost certainly mistaken. Victoria was by temperament and interest opposed to his foreign policy; Albert dreaded the complications into which his indiscretions must plunge the country; and both were nettled by the scant respect he showed for the authority of the crown.

From the Orleans family at any rate, he had now little to fear. Louis Philip died on August 26, 1850, and his daughter Louise, the sainted wife of Leopold of Belgium, on October 11 in the same year. The principal links between the houses of Coburg and Orleans were thus severed by death. For Belgium the death of the queen was sadly opportune, for it removed a living obstacle to an understanding with the new Napoleon.

Leopold, however, watched the rise of Bonaparte with the gravest apprehensions. He predicted his assumption of the imperial title, and dreaded that with it might be revived the Napoleonic traditions of the Rhine frontier and a universal hegemony. As he grew old, the king clung more and more to the old order of things, and seemed to forget that he owed his own crown to an infringement of the treaty of Vienna. Austria had now committed herself to a policy of oppression and reaction, but this champion of the liberal monarchy courted her favour and alliance as the best safeguard against French aggression. He married his son and heir, the duke of Brabant, afterwards Leopold II., to a Hapsburg princess, and his daughter Charlotte, six years later, to the archduke

Maximilian, brother of the emperor Francis Joseph. He lost nothing in the regard of his own people thereby, for the Belgians shared his dread of France, and having won their own freedom, were not disposed to worry about Hungary's and Italy's.

The reappearance of the Corsican Ogre in miniature alarmed the English as much as the Belgians, and with better reason ; for the eastern powers might guarantee the independence of Leopold's kingdom, but they would assuredly have done nothing to help the friend of all the revolutionaries on the continent. There was much warlike bustle on our shores. Our defences were overhauled, and our army declared, as it has been so often before and since, insufficient for our defence. Albert suggested the formation of a reserve composed of old soldiers, whose places were to be taken by recruits—after the principle now pretty well universal ; but the duke of Wellington would not hear of this. Various projects were discussed, and the militia was reorganised.

All the time the English press did their utmost to irritate the French and to precipitate hostilities. Albert found it most exciting and interesting. “ He grows daily fonder and fonder of politics,” wrote the queen to her uncle, “ and I grow daily to dislike them more. We women are not made for governing ; and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations ! ” Still better women might perhaps have resigned a position for which they felt themselves to be unfitted.

Gradually it was realised that Napoleon III. harboured no evil designs against England, and that, on the contrary, he sought her friendship. On September

21, 1853, Albert wrote to Stockmar, "Louis Napoleon wishes for peace, enjoyment, and cheap corn." It was Russia that loomed forth as the enemy, and England and France found it their common policy to frustrate her designs in the near east. We sent our fleet to the Bosphoros with orders to defend Ottoman territory from any attack. In a memorandum dated October 21 Albert expressed the hope that we should not wage war for the maintenance of the Ottoman empire, but for the interests of the European powers of civilisation, and that it would lead to a better arrangement than the "reimposition of the ignorant, barbarian, and despotic yoke of the Mussulman over the most fertile and favoured portion of Europe."

Lord Palmerston, who had returned to Downing Street, altogether disapproved of this memorandum, and said that we were bound at all hazards to maintain the integrity of the sultan's empire. On December 16 it was announced that his lordship had resigned, and ten days later that he had rejoined the ministry. About the same time the news came that the Turkish fleet had been destroyed by the Russians at Sinope. The English people cried "Treachery!" and said that the prince had done it all. It was he who had turned out Palmerston, he who had held back the British fleet till the Muscovites had sunk the Turkish ships, he who was about to sell the country to Russia.

Press and public made a dead set at the queen's consort. The old jealousy of his interference in affairs of state broke out afresh. With him in public odium were coupled Leopold and Stockmar, who could more fairly be charged with absolutist sympathies. The prince was described as the chief agent of the

Austro-Belgian-Coburg-Orleans clique, the avowed enemies of England, and the subservient tools of Russian ambition. The whisper, first insinuated for party purposes, grew into a roar. The rumour ran that the prince had been impeached for high treason. An enormous crowd collected outside the Tower of London to see him conveyed there, a prisoner, and could with the utmost difficulty be persuaded by the police to disperse. Some expected even more, and said that the queen herself had been committed as a traitor to the state.

The clamour against the throne became so loud that it had to be answered in parliament. The position of the queen's husband was anomalous. Some thought that he ought to be turned out of the room when questions of state were discussed. The English people did not object when their queen publicly promised to love, honour, and obey her husband, but they objected most strongly to her fulfilling that promise. One wonders what they would have said had they known that the queen had avowed her unfitness for government. The British constitution leads us into strange situations.

However, the controversy was put an end to by the emphatic declarations in the houses of parliament by Lords Aberdeen, Derby, and John Russell, and Mr. Walpole. The prince's unimpeachable loyalty to the country and his faithful observance of this wonderful constitution were proclaimed by these statesmen, and his undoubted right as a husband to advise and comfort his wife was vindicated by Lord Chief Justice Campbell. John Bull is always profoundly impressed by the utterances of a gentleman

in wig and gown. After this, not much was heard of the prince's wicked interference with affairs of state. He took the whole incident good humouredly, evidently doubting whether the British public were any saner than their system of government.

So far from acting in the interests of Russia, Albert was striving to make Prussia throw her influence into the scale against her. Austria was favourable to the western powers, and had she been sure of her northern neighbour, might have offered material help. War might thus have been averted. Duke Ernest zealously seconded his brother's efforts, and appealed to King Frederick William to deliver Germany from Russian ascendancy. Uncle Leopold, on the other hand, saw in an alliance of the three eastern powers the best protection for Belgium against the ambition of France. Napoleon III. tried hard to disarm his suspicions and through him to establish intimate personal relations with the English court.

On January 30, 1854, Prince Jerome Bonaparte arrived at Brussels to compliment the old king and to assure Belgium of France's goodwill. This visit was notified to Ernest by the French minister at Dresden in a circular which concluded with the words, "The emperor in sending to Brussels a prince of his family to visit a sovereign who by his position and age is the natural head of the Coburgs, is glad to record his belief that there is no member of that illustrious house who is not animated by the most friendly sentiments towards him."

Ernest, who loved to meddle in international politics, made this letter an excuse for a visit to the emperor. Leopold approved his mission, which he

hoped might do some good to Prussia, and would place the Coburgs "just where they appeared merely useful." The duke was received in the most friendly way by the emperor, who said the nicest things of all his family. They discussed the attitude of Frederick William, and his majesty remarked that he did not expect him to go to war for nothing. "But after all," he inquired, "what does he want? Hanover? Saxony?" to which Ernest replied that Prussia's disinterested policy would never permit her to covet her neighbours' dominions, an assurance which must have been remembered with a smile in after years both by prince and emperor. It was agreed that Prussia could not be bribed, and soon after it was known that Frederick William had given the Tsar a pledge of neutrality.

War was formally declared by England and France against Russia at the end of March. Austria and Prussia continued to exchange messages with each other and the belligerents, and to offer their good offices. A few days before the landing of the allies in the Crimea, Leopold, against the wish of his ministry, was induced to visit the French emperor at Calais. He was then persuaded to go as far as the camp at Boulogne, but his advisers would not suffer him to assist at a review of the troops. Napoleon thanked him for the kindness he had shown to his mother, Queen Hortense, in 1814, and spoke flatteringly of his son, the duke of Brabant, afterwards Leopold II.

A few days later, when the king of the Belgians had returned to Brussels, Albert was entertained by the emperor. They agreed very well together. The prince thought that his host was decidedly benevolent

and anxious for the good of his people, but "like all rulers before him" had a poor opinion of their political capacity. The prince made a good impression on the emperor, who afterwards described him as one of the highest intelligences of his time.

The war in the Crimea dragged its slow length along. All the combatants were dissatisfied with the performances of their armies, and grumbled unceasingly at their generals. The English, as usual on such occasions, indulged in ecstasies of self-depreciation, and led other powers to suppose we were much weaker than we were. England is a giant with a fondness for posing as a crippled dwarf. King Leopold knew the Tsar's desire for peace and urged Albert to bring it about on easy terms. He spoke with considerable bitterness about England, which he had never forgiven for the threatened suppression of his allowance, and spoke of our alliance with France "as riding another man's horse with our own spurs."

Albert, replying, complained of his uncle's unfriendly tone, and told him that England would not lay down her arms till the object she had proposed was attained. The chief obstacle to peace, he told the prince of Prussia (afterwards William I.), was Frederick William's attachment to Russia. Otherwise the Northern Colossus would have had to bend before a united Europe. The prince hinted that Prussia might have to pay for her neutrality by the loss of Poland, and reminded her that the French army was eager to cross the Rhine. Even Stockmar, who hated the French, deplored the attitude of the North German power. Nicholas died on March 2, 1855, with his last breath adjuring Frederick William to be faithful to his alliance.

Meanwhile, through the Saxon embassy attempts were made to detach France from England. They failed. Austria prepared to intervene actively if Russia continued to reject the terms she proposed as a basis of peace. The new Tsar, Alexander II., gave way, and on March 30, 1856, the war was ended by the treaty of Paris.

For the moment Leopold breathed more freely. His confidence in the stability of his kingdom was that year encouraged by the manifestations of national spirit evoked by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the independence of Belgium. King and people appeared to stand hand in hand for the defence of the country. Their harmony was temporarily clouded the next year, when the measures proposed by the catholic ministry provoked a tempest of opposition throughout the kingdom. Crowds threatened to attack the house of parliament. Leopold was profoundly stirred. "I will get into the saddle," he cried, "to protect the representatives of the nation. I will never allow the majority to be insulted. This means the end of the constitutional régime. I have kept my oath these twenty-six years—they have now released me."

But the king was not forced to take up arms in defence of the constitution. The government, recognising that it no longer commanded the confidence of the nation, withdrew the obnoxious measures, and was succeeded a few months later, without any disorder, by a liberal ministry.

The tumult had only subsided a few weeks when, on July 27, 1857, Leopold's daughter, Charlotte (named after his first wife), was married at Brussels to the Archduke Maximilian, brother of the emperor of

Austria. The match had been arranged the previous year. Queen Victoria and Leopold himself would have preferred King Pedro of Portugal as a bridegroom, but the princess fell in love with the Austrian ; and since he was an archduke she was allowed to have her way. Her father was not as eager as he had been for an Austrian alliance. Since the treaty of Paris, Napoleon had talked freely about the necessity of redrafting the map of Europe and of freeing oppressed nationalities. His reconciliation with Russia was complete ; his anger was directed against the power which had brought it about. Cavour was ever at his ear, to remind him of the wrongs of Italy.

The king of the Belgians rejoiced when his new son-in-law was sent to govern Lombardy and Venetia as his brother's viceroy. The old king expected great things from Maximilian's semi-liberal views, and hoped that he might be the means of averting an Italian war. The Milanese showed their respect for the archduke by saluting him with profound courtesy when he appeared unofficially ; and by studiously ignoring him in his capacity as viceroy. His moderation was not at all pleasing to his brother, who removed him from the viceregal throne in 1859.

Albert and his wife's subjects had now come to share Leopold's suspicions of their late brother-in-arms. Napoleon had offered to assist England in the Indian mutiny—Belgium, by the way, also offered two regiments—and the courts continued on friendly terms. The English nation sympathised as warmly as he with the Italians and were not directly endangered by his scheme of readjusting the frontiers of Europe ; but they chose to be alarmed by his military preparations

and began to abuse him as loudly as they had lately praised him. In January 1858, while Duke Ernest happened to be visiting the French court, an Italian named Orsini threw a bomb at the imperial carriage. The bomb proved to have been made at Birmingham, and the plot was hatched in London. The French loudly demanded the punishment of the assassin's accomplices, which an English jury refused. The relations of the two nations were strained almost to breaking point, and a visit which Albert and his wife paid to the emperor at Cherbourg did not improve matters, for the prince was alarmed by the strength of the French navy and urged the English government to look to their defences.

The explosion in the Rue Lepelletier found an echo also in Belgium. France sternly warned her weak neighbour not to harbour French refugees or to suffer her press to attack the imperial government. This was hard on the little kingdom, which in 1855 had passed a law to punish conspiracy against the life of a foreign sovereign. But Napoleon was very angry with the Coburgs, whom he had so lately professed to regard as his best friends. The prince-regent of Prussia had taken up an anti-Russian and nationalist attitude, and though Leopold had disapproved of this, he was charged, together with his nephew, with endeavouring to promote a German league against France. This the emperor declared he would never tolerate. He told the Belgian minister that Belgium could exist only on condition of her intimate union with France. "For that matter," he added, "this is not only my policy, it was that of Louis Philip; it is that of France." The envoy answered meekly,

and Albert writing to his uncle on January 18, 1859, blamed him for assenting to such a definition of Belgium's position and also for his efforts to detach Prince William of Prussia from his nationalist ministers.

The old king distrusted the liberals almost as much as he feared France, and he wanted to bring about a renewal of the alliances of 1813. But he wrote in very explicit terms to the emperor, disavowing the designs attributed to him, while the English ambassador at Paris succeeded in dispelling the suspicions his majesty had formed of the prince consort.

Both the Coburg princes anxiously assisted England's efforts at Vienna to adjust the differences between France and Austria. "The chances of war" wrote Leopold on April 30, "will be against Austria. She could not keep Piedmont, even if she were victorious; she could not penetrate into France. England and Prussia may do much. Prussia could not embark in a war important for her, no doubt, but nevertheless not hers. If Prussia is too humble, the war will become general."

As Albert had feared, Austria put herself in the wrong by demanding the instant disarmament of Sardinia. On April 29 the troops crossed the Ticino; on May 3 France declared war against her. At the same time it was reported and believed in England that a treaty offensive and defensive united France and Russia. The country was wild with excitement. The volunteer corps sprang into existence, and sympathy with Italy was lost in dread of France. Like Leopold, every one believed that the war would become general. Even Switzerland and Denmark armed. Belgium wisely refused to take any defensive

measures and took her stand on the guarantee of all the powers.

Austria was beaten, Italy began the work of liberation, and there was no general war. It is not now worth while to inquire why we, so ready to fight Russia in defence of the Turks, should have hindered rather than helped our late ally in his defence of the Italians against the Austrians. Leopold paid a visit to the conqueror in September 1859, at Biarritz, and again in the summer of 1864 and 1865. The emperor seems at last to have delivered him from the nightmare of the absorption of his kingdom by France. Napoleon III., he was at length persuaded, had never meditated an attack on Belgium or on England. "The situation," wrote the old monarch to his ambassador at Berlin, "would be very different if our neighbour were not so benevolent, which is incontestable, and so important."

Albert had lost all faith in Napoleon's benevolence. He had come to regard the emperor as a Mephistopheles, and his most amiable projects as sinister designs against the peace of Europe. When Savoy and Nice were annexed, with the consent of the inhabitants, to France, England and Prussia saw in this an assertion of the French pretensions to a "natural boundary," which meant not only the Alps but the Rhine—and probably the Channel Islands, those bright jewels in our crown.

"They tried in Berlin," says Duke Ernest, "to derive some encouragement from the personal exchange of opinions between the prince-regent and my brother. But nothing was stranger than the difference which immediately appeared between their

views. Where Prussia showed sympathy, England was antipathetic, and vice versa. Only the furious language against the French autocrat, mixed with an equal dose of apprehension, made a point of union in the correspondence between my brother and the prince-regent. . . . For in everything that was favourable to the unity of Italy and Sardinia, the English court indulged in the most extravagant sentiments, and in everything that implied injury to Austria and infringed legitimate rights the prince-regent manifested discontent. My brother was just as hostile to 'the incorrigible rule of the Austrians,' as he termed it, as the regent was inclined to combat the revolution everywhere. They were both very angry with Napoleon; but the one wanted him delivered up to judgment as a promoter of the revolution, and the other regretted that he was sullyng the laurels of the champion of liberty by the taint of annexation."

However, Albert was presently satisfied that Napoleon harboured no projects of aggrandisement on the side of Italy and that his theory of France's natural boundaries was no more literal or logical than his principle of free nationalities. In the summer of 1861 the prince's heart was gladdened by the revival of the movement in favour of German unity, to which the accession of the late regent, as King William I., somehow lent an impetus. His joy was not shared by the English press, which then, as now, was decidedly anti-German in sympathy.

The outbreak of the civil war in North America also clouded the political horizon, and the court was in mourning for the duchess of Kent on March 16. At the moment the relations between the United

States and the mother country were stretched to breaking point because of the seizure of the confederate envoys, Mason and Slidell, the prince himself lay on a sick-bed. His indisposition at first appeared trifling. He was only forty-two years old, and as every one thought, had another twenty or thirty years before him. In the morning of December 1 he rose in considerable pain, and drafted a dispatch to the United States government, which by its firm and tactful tone afforded a way out of the difficulty for both powers. This German prince's last service to humanity was to avert a war between the two great Anglo-Saxon nations. On December 14, 1861, he was dead.

The coldness with which the prince consort was regarded by the English in his earlier life gave way in the last decades of his widow's reign to sentimental reverence. Albert was not the hero or the saint of Tennyson's rapt imagining. He was not a great man. His ideas—at least those which have been communicated to us—were seldom original or strikingly lofty. He was very little in advance of his age. An earnest but not a profound thinker, he seems to have accepted without question the ethical and economic bases of the society of his day. He never doubted that the existing order of things was worth maintaining, and never realised that you cannot preserve a rotten tree by lopping off a dead branch here and there. He would have approved Gambetta's dictum, "There is no social problem, there are only social problems." He was in most respects a liberal of the old school, believing in free trade and open competition, and distrusting state interference. He had no faith in patri-

archal government, and realised that nations were not to be treated as children. He helped to place the means of self-improvement within reach of the working class, but he warned his grandmother not to give the Coburg peasantry an education which might make them discontented with their place in society. In rejecting compulsion and teaching the poor to rely upon their own efforts, he underrated the power of circumstance and heredity to shape their destiny. But he was amazingly well endowed with common sense, a faculty inimical perhaps to true greatness. He saw much merit in the theory of ministerial responsibility, but, as every one remembers, he despised our party system, and once publicly observed that in this country representative institutions were on their trial.

But the jealousy of the press and public tied his tongue; and if he perceived the absurdity of our laws as well as of our constitution he never dared to say so. Given a free hand, he might have realised the modern ideal of a business government. Whatever influence the crown exercised in England from the day of his coming to the day of his death must fairly be credited to him.

Unfortunately, perhaps, his action was limited to foreign affairs and high politics and to such other things as don't really matter. A patriotic German throughout his life, he never ceased to study the interests of his adopted country and to put them first and foremost. He was not misnamed Albert the good. Good he certainly was, according to his own standards and those of his generation. He was kind, tolerant, faithful to his wife and friends, and unswervingly disinterested. We owe him a heavy debt for his steady

encouragement of arts and letters. He grafted a taste for culture on the English lower and middle classes which has endured to this day. He would have liked the court of England to outshine Ferrara and Weimar as a resort of the aristocracy of intellect. If those who succeeded him showed no permanent attachment to his ideals, the fault was not his. We do not now meet our princes arm-in-arm with our men of genius. The Guelph tradition in the palace has proved stronger than the Coburg.

Those who had made Albert's marriage did not long survive his untimely end. He and Stockmar met for the last time at Coburg in 1860. The old physician had given up active meddling with political affairs and retired to his native place. Leopold and his nephew wrote often to the friend who had so lovingly followed every step in their careers. The untimely death of his Telemachus was a terrible blow to the old man. The year after he mingled his tears with those of Victoria, who had gone to Coburg to meet the emperor Francis Joseph. "My dear good prince!" he sobbed, "How happy I shall be to see him again! and it will not be long!" It may not have been long, for Stockmar ended his life of seventy-six years on July 8, 1863.

As the old familiar faces of his early manhood receded into the twilight of memory, Leopold of Belgium felt that he too had not many more years to live. "I grow old," he reflected wearily, "I can say with truth that I have been a successful king." He had for two or three years past suffered from an internal malady, from which in 1862 he was delivered by the skill of an English surgeon. The universal



ERNEST II., DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA.



joy of his people upon his recovery was the best commentary on his reign. But he was respited not reprieved. On December 2, 1865, the official gazette announced that he was again seriously ill. He surrounded himself with the novels which had cheered the loneliness of his life at Claremont, and with cheerful calm awaited the end. On Sunday, December 10, he died in the thirty-fifth year of his reign and within six days of his seventy-fifth birthday.

He was the founder of his family's fortunes and the pilot of the Belgian monarchy through its most perilous years. Probably none of his successors will ever supplant him in his people's affection and esteem. His character was like that of his subjects—calm, passionless, practical, and cautious. He was an essentially civilised man, well suited to a highly civilised, industrial community. He sympathised with and stimulated his people's craving for material progress, and, more enlightened than Albert, insisted that the state should intervene on behalf of industry and oppressed labour. He conceived many of the projects which were realised by his able son, among others, a Belgian colonial empire. He watched with sleepless vigilance over the independence of his country, and to his last hour strenuously advocated the creation of a strong army. He had no passions in private life, and no violent prejudices in public affairs. The reactionary tendencies of his old age were mainly inspired by fear of revolutionary aggression. He had no more faith than other men in the opinion of the majority, but he realised that it was the only practicable basis of government. He was not so much the ideal constitutional monarch as the ideal chairman

or president—imposing order and mutual respect on conflicting parties by the mere weight of his impartiality and obedience to established rules. He kept order in his kingdom somewhat as a grey-haired old man will by his mere presence quell the disputes of too ardent youths.

He had, like all his house, great faith in his own statecraft, and, as we have seen, tried to manage other people's kingdoms as well as his own. The undoubted influence he exercised over Queen Victoria before her marriage led him perhaps to overestimate the authority he possessed in the council of nations. Albert was at times inclined to poke quiet fun at his uncle's foible ; yet Duke Ernest admits that since the death of Prince Metternich, Leopold was looked upon, here and there, as a political oracle, from which the best information could be obtained as to the popular and liberal tendencies of the educated and wealthy classes.

His talents, it has been observed, were rather of a diplomatic than a legislative order. He had not the imagination or the foresight required of the great lawgiver ; nor indeed would he, according to the Belgian constitution, have had much chance to exercise any such faculty. He was called the justice of the peace for Europe, and the title fitted him admirably. He had all the judicial qualities. His other surname, the European Nestor, attests as truly the affectionate veneration which he inspired in all who knew him in his green old age.

CHAPTER XI

CHARLOTTE, EMPRESS OF MEXICO

THE first king of the Belgians was fortunate in his death as in his life. He did not live to witness the miserable fate of his only daughter, the victim of a dream which his ambition had approved and his statesmanship failed to condemn. With her name, the archduchess Charlotte inherited the ill-luck of her father's first wife. She was the human sacrifice which fortune demanded of her favourites the Coburgs. She soared higher than any of her house, and fell more heavily.

She had been a sad and serious little princess, to whom her mother talked nothing but religion and her father nothing but politics. She became immensely interested in the business of government. Her father conceived a high opinion of her capacity for rule. That a knowledge or experience of human nature was essential to intelligent government, he would not probably have admitted. Instead, he allowed his daughter to be present at councils of state, and encouraged her to study political works. Her portraits reveal no great beauty, but to the imaginative may tell something of her energy and native force of character.

At seventeen this politically minded young person

fell genuinely in love with that long-bearded, be-whiskered sailor, the archduke Maximilian, and was freed from parental control. For the next two years she queened it at Monza and Venice, exulting like a true Coburg in the glitter and circumstance of royalty; and then, cast down from her pride of place, she retired with her husband to the palace of delights he had built on the shores of the Adriatic.

Maximilian loved the sea—an element seemingly so uncongenial to an Austrian; and he varied the cloying calm of his existence by voyages to Madeira and the remote Mediterranean ports. Charlotte, it is said, loved the tinsel of courts better than the silvery gleam of the ocean. She relished the splendours of Vienna, though there was not much love lost between her and the empress Elizabeth. Nor were their husbands very warm friends, for though Maximilian, since the birth of a son to Francis Joseph, was no longer heir to the imperial crown, he is thought to have considered himself a very likely successor to his brother in the probable event of a revolution. This ambition, if it was ever seriously entertained, was too remote to occupy the attention of Charlotte, who, restless and childless, longed, like all the Coburgs, to wear the crown.

It came at last from a very unlikely quarter. Republican institutions seem nowadays so firmly implanted all over the American continent that we are apt to forget how for a long time after their emancipation from Spain, the Latin states were troubled by dreams of monarchy. In the late forties a scheme was afoot to make Ecuador into a kingdom for the son of Queen Christina of Spain and the duke of

Riansares.¹ In Mexico it had, soon after the separation from the mother country, been proposed to place the younger brother of Ferdinand VII. upon the throne. At a later period, Yturvide, a native Mexican, actually reigned as emperor. He was deposed, and having been captured in an attempt to reassert his authority was shot at Padilla in July 1824. Since then, the country, though acknowledging a nominally republican system of government, had been swayed by a succession of rival tyrants and dictators, with occasional intervals of constitutional rule and frequent relapses into downright anarchy.

These domestic troubles had been aggravated by the secession of Texas, and the war which resulted with the United States. The northerners penetrated to the capital, and annexed upper California and the whole of the vast region north of the Rio Grande. Fear of the great Anglo-Saxon commonwealth undoubtedly continued to haunt many Mexicans, but all efforts to rescue the country from its benighted condition and to present a united front to the foe were defeated by the incessant strife of the two great factions, clerical and liberal. Both parties might well have despaired of the republic, but it was, of course, the losers for the time being who were most anxious to change the form of government and to bring a new master upon the troubled scene.

As far back as 1840 the national congress was urged to re-establish the monarchy by Don José Maria Gutierrez de Estrada, one of Yturvide's old ministers. The audacious imperialist was forced to leave the country and took refuge in Paris. On the

¹ See the present writer's "A Queen at Bay" (Hutchinson).

outbreak of the American war, he addressed a memorial to the British and French cabinets, calling their attention to the expansion of the United States and appealing to them to set up a stable monarchical government in Mexico as the best bulwark against Yankee aggression.

About the same time Louis Napoleon published a pamphlet on the Nicaragua canal and advocated the formation of a powerful state in central America, as a means of checking Anglo-Saxon ascendancy. Louis Philip and Palmerston were too busy to give heed to such far-fetched proposals, but Gutierrez a few years later won Santa Anna, the dictator of Mexico, over to his side, and was secretly deputed to select a sovereign for his country from among the reigning houses of Europe. Then came the Crimean war, which deafened the ears of the statesmen of the old world to the Mexican's whispered invitations, and the fall of Santa Anna, which deprived his mission of any official character.

Things meanwhile went from bad to worse in Mexico. Civil strife reduced the country to anarchy and beggary. Towards the end of 1859 the liberals gained the upper hand, and their provisional president, Juarez, was recognised as president by the United States. His chief political opponents fled to Europe. A vigorous anti-clerical policy exasperated the clergy against the new administration, while the foreign creditors of the ruined state besieged their respective courts with petitions for assistance and redress.

Gutierrez saw this to be the right moment to renew his intrigues. He had married the daughter of Count von Lützow, the Austrian minister to Rome, and

through him had ready access to the imperial court. The archduke Maximilian would, he thought, make an excellent emperor of Mexico. Maximilian, when this was hinted to him, showed no eagerness for the honour, but it appealed most strongly to Charlotte's restless ambition. Here was the crown which always came at last to the Coburgs! Much better to take what was offered than to wait on the remote chances of a revolution in Austria. "Sure to find a supporter in the archduchess," says one historian,¹ "provided King Leopold approved the project, Gutierrez set out for Belgium, and received from the Nestor of sovereigns the fullest approbation and formal encouragement. The king, a practical man, saw in this project an imperial crown for his daughter, a cause of anxiety the less for Austria, a useful alliance between Belgium, England, Austria, France, and Spain. From the political point of view, this crown was surer for the princess than that of Austria, commercially, Antwerp and all Belgium could not fail to benefit by the opening of this new market in America.

"Gutierrez returned then to Miramar. I have every reason to believe that he had secured the approval in writing not only of the king of the Belgians, but also of the emperor of Austria. He saw first the archduchess, who promised to second his efforts, then the archduke, to whom he exposed the sad state of Mexico, appealing to these young descendants of Charles V. to undertake the rescue and regeneration of his country." Maximilian refused to consider such a proposal unless he was supported by the powers

¹ Domenech.

interested in Mexico and was invited by the Mexican people.

Leaving him to the counsels of his wife, the self-constituted envoy returned to Paris at the end of the year 1860. He now disclosed his plans to the leading Mexican refugees, and with some difficulty secured the support of General Almonte, the Padre Miranda, Monsignor Labastida, and other clerical chiefs. They knew, of course, that there was no monarchical party in Mexico and that Maximilian would have to be helped on to his trans-Atlantic throne by foreign bayonets. To Austria it was vain to look for such auxiliaries. France, Spain, and England, on the other hand, had long meditated intervention in Mexico on behalf of their unpaid bondholders; and Napoleon III., it was remembered, had favoured the scheme of a Latin-American monarchy fifteen years before.

Luckily Gutierrez had a friend at court. This was a young countryman named Hidalgo, who had made himself useful to various high-born Spanish dames and had by them been presented to the empress Eugenie. In the autumn this agreeable Mexican was able to bring the monarchist project to the notice of her imperial majesty. She approved it enthusiastically, conceiving it to be the duty of a catholic to restore the dominion of the church in this far-off land, and of a good Spaniard to preserve the conquests of Cortes from the greedy maw of the Anglo-Saxon heretic.

The proposals of the refugees instantly fired the perfervid imagination of Napoleon III. Here was the opportunity to realise the splendid dream which had dazzled him when a captive within the walls of

Ham. His wife found him two-thirds converted to the party she had embraced. The United States was torn asunder by the war of secession. This was the moment for Europe to fall upon defaulting Mexico, and to force her to settle her debts. This only was the object proposed to Great Britain, which by the convention of October 31, 1861, agreed to co-operate with France and Spain in an expedition to Vera Cruz. The French emperor had already told the Spanish government that he would see with pleasure the restoration of the monarchy in the threatened territory under an Austrian archduke. Spain had replied that she would confine herself to the protection of her subjects and the re-establishment of order. Her troops, commanded by the redoubtable General Prim, were the first, in December 1861, to occupy Mexican soil; they were soon joined by a French detachment, which was repeatedly reinforced; and by an inconsiderable contingent of English marines and bluejackets.

No opposition to the landing of the invaders was offered by the Mexicans, and the expeditionary force was even permitted by convention to encamp on the healthier high ground around Orizaba. President Juarez made desperate efforts to pay the bill presented to him, but the demands of France were so extortionate that even her allies guessed that she did not want them to be paid. Presently this suspicion was confirmed by the appearance of Almonte and other native reactionaries in the French camp. They made no secret of their intention to set up a monarchy, and declared that they acted with the sanction of the French emperor.

Prim, who was in command of the allied forces, addressed a letter of remonstrance to his majesty on March 17, 1864, and refusing to be a party to the imperialist conspiracy, Spain and England immediately after withdrew their troops. The Spanish general is accused by the partisans of Maximilian of having himself aspired to the Mexican throne. Upon his departure the French advanced upon Puebla, but were driven back by the troops of Juarez and forced to await reinforcements in their old position at Orizaba. Meanwhile Almonte and his confederates sedulously intrigued with the chiefs of the clerical faction throughout the country, and called upon the Mexican to assist the French in establishing a strong government. In the autumn of 1862 General Forey landed from France with an army of 27,000 men. He was obliged to postpone his advance till the following spring. On May 19 he took Puebla and on June 10 made his triumphal entry into Mexico city.

His instructions from the emperor left no doubt as to the purpose of the expedition. "Having reached Mexico city," said Napoleon, "General Almonte and all those who have embraced our cause should convoke an assembly to decide the destinies of the country. It goes without saying that should the Mexicans prefer a monarchy, it is to the interest of France to support them, and the general can indicate the archduke Maximilian as the candidate of France. If Mexico remains independent and maintains the integrity of her territory, with a stable government constituted by the arms of France, we shall have erected an impassable barrier against the en-

croachments of the United States, maintained the independence of our colonies and those of Spain, established our beneficial influence in the centre of America, and have created immense outlets for our commerce." "The establishment of the Mexican empire," observed Napoleon, complacently reflecting on these instructions, "will be the most brilliant page in the history of my reign."

The republican forces retired slowly before the invaders towards the north and south of Mexico. The clericalist caucus convened by Almonte met at the capital within a palisade of French bayonets, and on July 10, 1863, decreed the restoration of the imperial form of government. The archduke Maximilian was unanimously elected emperor, but should he decline the honour, Napoleon was to be asked to nominate another catholic prince in his stead. A deputation, which of course included Gutierrez and Hidalgo, was instructed to wait upon the archduke at Miramar and to offer him the imperial crown. His highness, as was to be expected, declared that he was grateful and flattered, but he must withhold his acceptance till the Mexican nation at large had ratified the decree of the congress, and till he had obtained the guarantees essential to the existence of the empire. The delegates, though they had expected an unconditional acceptance, assured the archduke that his terms would be complied with. With the aid of the French troops they had no doubt they could persuade the Mexican people to ratify anything, and for the guarantees, they looked to Napoleon himself.

Maximilian had, in fact, made up his mind to

embark on this wild adventure. He was encouraged by his wife. Her sage father did nothing to dissuade him ; he believed in the luck of the Coburgs. The Emperor Francis Joseph, on the other hand, as well as his mother, and Charlotte's grandmother, the aged Marie Amélie, entreated the archduke to abandon the enterprise. They reminded him that only a third of the country was occupied by the French, and that his throne would depend entirely upon them. They represented the inevitable weakness of his position and the bitter hostility of his most powerful neighbour, the United States. The Austrian government formally dissociated itself from the scheme, and gave the emperor of the French to understand that there could be no question of surrendering Venetia in gratitude for this doubtful favour to a prince of the imperial house.

Charlotte stopped her husband's ears to these warnings. Nor would she suffer him to listen to the protests of Juarez's secretary, who came to seek him at Miramar. Almonte sent encouraging reports by every mail, and his highness was most ready to take the adhesion of the central states, as they were, one by one, subdued by Forey, as the expression of the national will on which he had insisted.

There remained, however, the guarantees expected of the French emperor. Maximilian telegraphed to Gutierrez de Estrada, refusing to accept unless he were promised three million francs and twenty-five thousand French soldiers. The council of state considered these demands exorbitant. The archduke stood firm. The Mexican envoy then (if we are to believe the duc de Persigny) turned to the

duc de Morny, the emperor's half-brother, and asked him to accept the crown of Montezuma if the Hapsburg prince continued obstinate. Morny without hesitation accepted. Napoleon was livid with rage, but his brother stood firm. The entreaties of the empress and the counsels of Walewski could not shake his resolution. The emperor gave in, and accepted Maximilian's conditions. They were afterwards embodied in the convention of Miramar, whereby France bound herself to maintain an army of twenty thousand men in Mexico till the year 1867, by which time Maximilian hoped to have an army of his own. But the new empire was saddled with the cost of the expedition and all the enormous debt piled up by preceding governments.

These terms were settled in the spring of 1863, when Maximilian and Charlotte paid a visit in truly imperial state to the Tuileries, and the two empresses talked Spanish all day. "Archdupe rather than archduke," the courtiers murmured; and on his return to Austria the prince for a moment seemed to share their misgivings. His brother insisted that in accepting the crown of Mexico he should renounce all rights whatever to the throne of his ancestors. However the heritage of Montezuma might glitter, that of the Hapsburgs seemed more substantial after all. Maximilian held out for a renunciation voidable in the event of his abdication or dethronement; his brother would allow of no conditions.

On March 28 it was announced at Paris and Vienna that the archduke was about to withdraw from the Mexican project. General Frossard was at once sent to Miramar to bring him to reason. It was

plain that he did not underrate his interests in the Austrian succession. Perhaps this made Francis Joseph a little more ready to facilitate his departure. His majesty went to Miramar, and by promising his brother a pension in case of his dethronement, prevailed on him to sign the deed of renunciation. On April 10, 1864, Maximilian formally accepted the crown of Mexico offered him by Gutierrez de Estrada and his fellow delegates. Four days after, he and his wife sailed for his new dominions aboard the Austrian frigate *Novara*. The people of Trieste bade him the fondest of farewells. Charlotte impatiently looked forward to their arrival; Maximilian was profoundly dejected and behaved as one who had signed his own death-warrant.

The whole scheme was a mad one, dependent for its last chance of success on the resolute backing of France, and the Austrian prince was not the man to carry it to victory. He had the tastes of a dilettante and the training of a sailor. His experience of government was limited to his administration of the Italian provinces, which had given satisfaction to neither liberals nor reactionaries. It was strange, too, that Gutierrez de Estrada should have hoped to found a dynasty with a prince who was childless after five years of marriage, and who had no kinsman capable of succeeding him. These considerations did not dishearten Charlotte, who was busy throughout the long voyage across the Atlantic studying the history and geography of her new empire and discussing politics with her despondent consort.

On landing at Vera Cruz on May 20, the imperial pair were greeted with some enthusiasm, worked

up, it may be supposed, by Almonte and his colleagues. A deputation of Indians saluted Maximilian, in whom they professed to recognise the white prince from over the sea long since promised them as a deliverer. The picturesque costumes of the people, the semi-barbaric ceremonies, the gorgeous tropic background must have delighted the splendour-loving Charlotte and dissipated her husband's gloom. Entering Mexico city, they may easily have persuaded themselves that the empire of Montezuma was theirs, but not his fate. The republican forces had been driven by the French, now commanded by Bazaine, into the northern provinces of Chihuahua and Sonora. But the new emperor early perceived the weakness of the party which had called him to the throne, while pride and prudence both forbade him to depend entirely on foreign bayonets.

To the surprise of the clericals and conservatives, therefore, he adopted an attitude of conciliation towards the republicans, appointing many to important offices and proposing frankly liberal measures. In a public speech he referred to the government of the old Hapsburgs in Mexico as the servitude and despotism of centuries. From the church he would brook no dictation, nor would he consent to a general restitution of clerical property. This policy was primarily inspired, of course, by the wish to strengthen his position in his new dominions; but with the possibility of failure always before his eyes, Maximilian was desirous of creating for himself a reputation which might one day be useful to him in Europe also. When he heard that his renunciation of his rights as a prince of the house of Hapsburg had been

published, he addressed a vehement protest to the Austrian parliament, alleging that this renunciation had been extorted from him virtually by force, and that it was his brother who had urged him to accept the Mexican crown. Maximilian, it will be seen, was reluctant to burn all his boats behind him. He certainly tried to ensure himself a chilly welcome at his old home.

From the first there had been no love lost between him and the French commander-in-chief. The emperor resented his dependence upon the general, and the general despised the helplessness of the emperor. For a long time both were careful to hide this hostility beneath a mask of elaborate courtesy. When Bazaine married a wealthy Mexican lady their majesties attended the wedding in great pomp and showered magnificent presents on them both. Yet Maximilian wrote to Napoleon urging him to recall his lieutenant, and complained that the exactions of his allies were ruining the country.

The French were making war on the Mexicans, and as the nominal sovereign he felt bound to interfere at times on his wretched subjects' behalf. He criticised even the conduct of the military operations which determined the limits of his dominions from day to day. He attempted to form an effective native army, but he lacked the ability and the material to organise a real fighting machine. Under his orders were about six thousand Austrian volunteers, who had been persuaded to try their fortunes in the new world, and a Belgian legion of 1,600 men commanded by Colonel van der Smissen which Leopold had permitted to be raised for his daughter's defence.



MAXIMILIAN, EMPEROR OF MEXICO.

Except for these auxiliaries the Hapsburg emperor had to rely solely for the support of his throne upon the French.

As he confessed himself, his wife was the better man of the two. Charlotte, from the moment she first set foot on Mexican soil, threw herself heart and soul into the business of government. She organised her court on a scale perhaps a little too generous for so poor a country. She framed an elaborate ceremonial and etiquette, and got her husband to rebuke a small municipality severely for not showing her proper respect. She appointed two Indian ladies to high posts in her household. In their race she took a particular interest, and exerted herself to relieve them in their wretched condition. During one of his innumerable progresses through the country, Maximilian gave her authority to take what measures she thought fit to that end.

“The empress,” says Domenech, “was less patient than the emperor, and presided at the council in a manner very different from the sovereign’s. Instead of submitting her opinion to the ministers and leaving them to settle the matter at the Greek Kalends, she appeared at the board with all the documents by means of which she had studied the question in all its bearings, and then said to the ministers, ‘This, then, is the question, which after mature consideration should, it seems to me, be settled in this way; what do you say?’ The astonished ministers, out of politeness or conviction, of course replied, ‘Yes.’ The empress then went on: ‘The measure having been adopted, it will be announced in the official gazette this evening, and executed to-morrow.’”

“Such was more or less exactly the manner in which the empress presided over the council of state. Affairs moved rapidly when she was regent, and she seldom left the board with a measure rejected.” That was indeed the way in which to govern a country, though, unhappily, the laws she framed generally remained a dead letter, owing to the corruption and incapacity of the Mexican officials. As may easily be supposed, she did not always approve the acts of her husband. She was revolted by the barbarous decree he was prevailed upon to sign, sentencing all republicans taken in arms to be shot without trial. When General O’Horan gleefully reported that two rebel officers had been put to death in pursuance of this order, she drove him from her presence and insisted upon his dismissal. With the capacity of the Coburgs, she had inherited their civilised instincts.

In the midst of Maximilian’s perplexities came the news of the fall of Richmond and the break-up of the southern confederacy. The United States government had steadfastly refused to acknowledge the new empire and regarded its establishment by European arms as a menace to the independence of the continent. The victorious federal armies now pressing forward to the boundaries of Mexico cheered on the partisans of Juarez, and supplied them almost openly with arms, ammunition, and supplies. The tone of the American ambassador at the Tuileries became every day more threatening. Napoleon found that he had to deal with a nation of seasoned soldiers flushed with victory. He offered to withdraw his troops from Mexico if Washington would recognise the empire of Maximilian. The condition was re-

jected, and General Schofield was sent on a special and confidential mission to Paris to request on behalf of the United States government the early evacuation of Mexican territory by the French army.

Napoleon was unspeakably tired of the whole wild enterprise. His American policy was the subject of the severest criticism in the chambers and the press. Trouble was brewing in Germany and Italy. From Mexico he received nothing but recriminatory reports from Maximilian and Bazaine. By observing the terms of the convention of Miramar he was able to comply with the American's request. On January 22, 1866, it was officially declared that the evacuation would begin in the autumn and would be completed before the end of the following year.

This announcement was the death knell of the Mexican empire. Napoleon had mercifully sent an envoy to Maximilian to warn him of his intention and to advise him to abdicate. Aroused to a sense of his danger, the unfortunate prince dispatched Almonte to Paris with a message imploring his protector not to abandon him. Napoleon received the Mexican general with a rudeness which French historians think he must have learned from the American diplomatists. He not only refused to postpone the date of the evacuation, but threatened to withdraw his troops at once unless Maximilian fulfilled his part of the covenant and defrayed the cost of the expedition. To ask money from Mexico was to try to squeeze blood from a stone. The French emperor's object probably was to frighten his late protégé into abdication, which he believed was his one chance of salvation.

Maximilian began to think so, too. Encouraged by the Americans, the republicans of the north redoubled their efforts and penetrated farther and farther towards the capital. The French troops no sooner quitted a village than it was occupied by one of their flying columns. The emperor had no money and no men. He could not even found a dynasty. In the hope of pleasing the Mexicans, he had adopted the five-year-old son of Yturbide as his heir. "For the first time," wrote Charlotte to a friend in Europe, "I thank God that I am childless; for this child will, I fear, soon be an orphan."

Yet it was the empress who held back her husband's hand as he was about to resign his crown. She would hazard a last throw of the die. The courts of Europe would listen to the daughter of the Nestor of kings. Let Maximilian stand fast while she pleaded his cause. On July 8, 1866, she left Mexico city. Her husband bade farewell to her for the last time at the Rio Frio. At Vera Cruz the stolid, wondering people stood by and let her depart in silence. The vessel weighed anchor, and a month after entered the port of St. Nazaire. The first news that greeted her was of the defeat of Austria at Sadowa. She hurried to Paris. No court official welcomed her at the railway station. She put up at the Grand Hotel. Napoleon lay sick at St. Cloud. He shrank from the interview and postponed it as long as possible. At last the son of Queen Hortense and the granddaughter of Louis Philip met face to face. Charlotte showed Napoleon the letters in which he had promised not to abandon her husband. He pleaded the opposition of the parliament, of the people, of the United

States, the gravity of the European situation. "Very well," cried the empress, thinking to frighten him, "we will abdicate." "Good, abdicate!" replied the emperor, who hoped for no better solution of the problem.

On August 23 the broken-hearted woman left Paris for Miramar. She was mad with apprehension for her husband. She hurried to Rome to seek the intervention and protection of Pius IX. She entered the Vatican in fashionable attire and walked into the pontiff's apartments as one distraught. She began at once to talk of plots to murder her, and declared that assassins were waiting for her outside the palace. A medical man was privately summoned and perceived in her all the symptoms of insanity. To the dismay of the churchmen, she refused to leave the Vatican. In defiance of the new traditions of the papacy, she was allowed to pass the night there, in the charge of two nuns, who the next day coaxed her to their convent. From Rome she was conveyed with some difficulty to Miramar. She was examined by Dr. Riedel, the leading mental specialist of Vienna. Hers was not a temporary aberration, he reported—the black cloud of anxiety had extinguished, perhaps for ever, the light of reason. She was taken to her old home at Laeken, which she had left, a seventeen-year-old bride, nine years before. Fortune, always kind to her father's house, had deafened her ears to the blow she in her terror foresaw.

No drop in the cup of bitterness was spared her husband. The Atlantic cable had been laid in the July of that year. The giant nerve was soon to throb with the agonies of a dying empire. On

October 18 a telegram was handed to Maximilian's secretary, an Austrian named Herzfeld. As he slowly translated the ciphered message, he stammered and turned pale. "I can't make it out . . ." he began, "one of the empress's ladies is ill. . . ." "It must be she herself!" exclaimed the emperor, undeceived by the man's countenance. "Perhaps . . . They speak of a Dr. Riedel. . . ." "Who is Dr. Riedel?" asked Maximilian of Dr. Basch, who at that moment came in. "Dr. Riedel? The director of the lunatic asylum at Vienna. . . ." Then the emperor knew that he was divorced from his brave, true-hearted wife by a blackness worse than that of death.

Already the unhappy prince had learned of the humiliation of his native country by the arms of Prussia. Overwhelmed by sorrow for past events and apprehension of those to come, he sought a few weeks' retirement and refreshment at the delicious highland resort of Orizaba. As a tribute to his wife's memory perhaps, he revoked the decree sentencing to death republican prisoners of war. In his desolation, he turned to Bazaine as his only hope and safeguard. But Bazaine was no longer supreme in Mexico. The emperor had no sooner left the capital than General Castelnau arrived there, armed by Napoleon with the plenitude of imperial authority and charged to bring his all-but-abandoned protégé back to Europe.

One might suppose that Maximilian would at this juncture have gladly laid aside his crown of thorns and rushed to the side of his afflicted wife. But ambition was not dead within him. At Orizaba he received a letter from a Belgian named Eloin, one of

his most trusted secretaries, whom he had sent on a mission to Europe. This man had in some way gained the favour of old King Leopold, who recommended him to his daughter's husband, with the remark, "He will make up by his ambition for his want of talent." Eloin's ambition prompted him while in Mexico to foment discord between his master and the French commander-in-chief, and in Europe to promote that master's secret and disloyal aspirations to his brother's throne.

Writing from Brussels, he urged Maximilian to hold on to his crown as long as possible and to appeal to the Mexican nation to uphold him. "If this appeal is unsuccessful," went on the agent, "then his majesty, having accomplished his noble mission, can return to Europe with all the prestige which he enjoyed at his departure. In Austria I have observed that discontent is general. The emperor is discouraged; the people are impatient and openly demand his abdication; sympathy for your majesty is manifest throughout the empire."

Unfortunately for Maximilian, this letter had been addressed by Eloin to the care of the Mexican consul at New York. The only Mexican consul in that city recognised by the American authorities was the agent of Juarez, who, having read the letter, directed it to Maximilian and straightway published its contents. In consequence, his majesty was presently notified by the Austrian ambassador at his court that if he returned to his brother's dominions he would be held strictly to the provisions of the family compact of Miramar and would not be allowed to retain the imperial title.

In Europe, then, there was no future for Maximilian except that of a ruined adventurer, a disinherited prince. He adjourned the audience solicited by Castelnau from day to day. Bazaine, furiously jealous of the imperial envoy, whose powers conflicted with his own, hinted that if the emperor returned to the capital, the French army might conceivably remain in the country another year. It is difficult to fathom the motives of the man afterwards convicted of betraying his own country and of dishonouring the French flag. It may be that if the Mexican empire was to collapse, he preferred that it should be after rather than before the withdrawal of his army. The responsibility of his government would thereby seemingly be less. Maximilian listened to these treacherous encouragements. He threw himself into the arms of the clerical party, which he had so far flouted, and was promised their vigorous support. On November 30 he answered Castelnau's demand by a proclamation in which he declared his resolution to continue emperor of Mexico.

On January 5, 1867, he re-entered his capital. "I am not going to throw away my gun in order to escape the sooner," he told Bazaine. But that general dared no longer oppose the instructions of his rival, the imperial envoy. He was obliged to tell Maximilian that not only had he orders instantly to withdraw all the French troops but also the Belgians and Austrians. He spoke in vain. The men of the old world had abandoned him, the Hapsburg prince would trust to those of the new.

From the remotest corners of that vast territory, the war-worn, dust-covered French columns were slowly

converging upon the capital, while behind them the exultant republicans rose up like wolves scenting their prey. On February 5 the re-united army marched out of Mexico city. Maximilian did not even glance from his shuttered windows to see them go. No enemy obstructed the path of the invaders to the coast. From every hill and coppice, they were conscious that invisible forces were watching them, eager to deal with him they were leaving to his fate. Behind them the enemy noiselessly closed up as the sea in the track of a vessel. Near Orizaba, Bazaine sent back a last appeal to the doomed emperor to join him on the coast—even this messenger never reached his destination. On March 11, 1867, Bazaine and the last French regiment sailed from Vera Cruz.

The sham empire carved out by their bayonets crumbled into fragments. Maximilian realised that he was but the chief of a small faction in a country alive with his enemies. Liberal columns appeared as if produced by the evening dew, and overran the land. The imperial flag waved over only four cities—the capital, Queretaro, La Puebla, and Vera Cruz. Recruiting soldiers by press-gangs, levying forced contributions, the so-called emperor prepared to sell his sovereignty hard.

On February 23 he concentrated all his forces at Queretaro. They amounted to ten thousand men. He had a chance of beating the liberals in detail, but he was not a soldier but a sailor, and the member of a family notorious for ill-fortune in war. He hesitated. A few days later it was too late. The emperor and his army were besieged in Queretaro by the armies of Juarez. He determined to cut his

way through on the night of May 13; the attempt was postponed; and on the morning of the 15th the enemy were admitted to the fortress by a traitor named Lopez. Maximilian might easily have escaped in the confusion. Instead, with a handful of his followers he cut his way to a hill named the Cerro de las Campanas, overlooking the city. Within a few minutes the little band was surrounded by overwhelming forces. The emperor asked general Mejia if it were possible to fight a way through the enemies' line. "Impossible," replied the brave Indian soldier, "but I am ready to try if your majesty commands." "Enough blood has been shed," replied Maximilian, and he gave the signal to surrender. He handed his sword to the republican general Escobedo and was marched off a prisoner with his generals Miramon and Mejia, to a convent in the city.

The empire had fallen. His work was done, and Maximilian not improbably was glad to be relieved at last of his burden. The worst, he supposed, was over. He had left an act of abdication already signed in the hands of his ministers at the capital, and he now asked his captors to place him aboard an Austrian corvette which lay in the roads of Vera Cruz. He was once more the archduke Maximilian and wanted only to leave the country of his blasted ambition. His gaolers smiled grimly and told him they were awaiting orders from the president at San Luis Potosi. On May 21 the captives were informed that they were to be tried before a court-martial as rebels and enemies of the republic. Suddenly aroused to a sense of his deadly peril, the Austrian prince

telegraphed to Juarez, requesting an interview. It was refused. Maximilian then addressed himself to Baron Magnus, the Prussian minister at Mexico, who hurried to Juarez's headquarters, after appointing two eminent liberal advocates to undertake the high-born prisoner's defence.

It seemed incredible that these rude Mexican republicans should dare to lay violent hands on an archduke of Austria, a descendant of Charles V., yet Francis Joseph himself implored the government of the United States to intercede on his brother's behalf. Unluckily, the American minister was at New Orleans, and though he received fairly imperative messages from Washington, he refused to stir. However, he sent a representative, who found Baron Magnus and the agents of other powers besieging the doors of the triumphant president. The Prussian envoy pointed out that Maximilian was connected by blood or marriage with nearly every reigning house in Europe, and that all the sovereigns of the old world would be ready jointly and severally to guarantee that if released he should never be allowed to trouble Mexico.

Not less pressing appeals in the name of humanity were made by the Americans, concerned for the fair fame of republicanism. It soon became evident that these appeals were fruitless. The doom of Maximilian was decreed. Juarez listened to arguments and entreaties with the stoical patience of the Indian race to which he belonged. On June 13 the court-martial sat at Queretaro. In vain the advocates for the defence pleaded the political character of the accused, maintaining they were simply prisoners of war. Maximilian was not present. That evening

he was informed that he and the two generals were sentenced to death, and were to be shot on the 16th. The diplomatists and counsel attempted a last and desperate appeal to the president. He merely respited the condemned for three days.

An American lady, the princess of Salm Salm, threw herself at the Indian's feet and grovelled in the dust, praying for mercy. "I grieve, madame," he replied, "to see you thus; but if all the emperors and kings of Europe knelt at my feet, I could not spare that life. It belongs to the nation and the nation demands that it should be taken." Maximilian, partially consoled for his impending fate by a false report of his wife's death, sent a last request to the president that he would spare the lives of the two generals. This also was refused.

On the morning of June 19, 1867, the three men were driven in hired vehicles to the hill where they had made their last stand. Maximilian was placed in the middle of the row of three. Seeing this, he promptly changed places with Miramon, as a last mark of respect to his valiant general. The consolations of the catholic religion were administered, and the doomed men were left face to face with the platoon. The ex-emperor expressed the hope that their lives would be considered by the conquerors sufficient expiation, and that the reign of bloodshed would now cease. He gave the word to fire, and a moment after the archduke Maximilian of Hapsburg, brother of the emperor of Austria, lay dying on the ground between his dead partisans, pierced by the bullets of the Mexican republicans.

The animosity which had disgraced a righteous

cause pursued him after death. For a long time Juarez refused to surrender the body of his late adversary and victim. Even when the brave admiral Tegethoff, the hero of Lissa, came to beg the corpse on behalf of the widowed archduchess Sophie, the Mexicans insisted on a formal and humble demand from the Austrian government itself. At last, at the end of September, the lifeless form of Maximilian was taken aboard the Austrian frigate *Novara*, to be laid beside his ancestors at Vienna on January 18, 1868.

And to-day there still sits an old woman, seventy years of age, in a Belgian château, who calls herself empress of Mexico, and talks at times about the husband who died there but a little while since in the full exercise of his sovereignty. This tragic spectre of a long-forgotten empire is Charlotte, daughter of Leopold of Coburg, first king of the Belgians.

CHAPTER XII

KING FERDINAND AND THE CROWN OF SPAIN

FERDINAND OF PORTUGAL, like his cousin of England, had outlived his unpopularity, as, unlike him, he had outlived his wife. His persistent tampering with the constitution was forgotten and forgiven by a people who could hardly have told you on any given day under which constitution they lived. At the time of his wife's death, his eldest son, Pedro, was only sixteen years old; and Ferdinand governed the realm as regent for the next two years as a matter of right and amid general applause.

The Hungarian prince was in fact no longer a foreigner. He had not stirred out of the kingdom for twenty years past, and under the Portuguese sun he had ripened into a true southerner. The artist king, his people called him, and were glad to observe in him many of the artist's foibles. He had lost all his old stiffness, was affable, pleasure-loving, and luxurious. He humoured old Saldanha and treated rebellions and pronunciamentos as something of a joke. Public works interested him more than politics. He exerted himself to embellish the capital, made parks, and laid out public walks. He transported the remains of the princes of the house of Braganza to a new mausoleum in the cathedral of St. Vincent,

and planted the jagged heights of Cintra with pines.

His son Pedro, who took over the government on his eighteenth birthday, inherited none of his father's gaiety. He was a glum youth, whose face never relaxed into a smile. He devoted himself very seriously to the business of kingship, and was probably the only man in the country who understood the constitution in all its details. To him belongs the honour of having abolished the barbarous practice of capital punishment. Wise though he was, he could not save his kingdom from a cruel humiliation. Portugal having seized a French slaver, the *Charles et Georges*, and imprisoned her captain, was threatened with war by the French emperor and compelled to pay a heavy indemnity.

The next year, Pedro's young wife, Stephanie of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, unexpectedly died. "During the four years of my reign," wrote the king, "my people and I have been companions in misfortune." There was more to come. On November 6, 1861, the infant Ferdinand, fourth son of the late queen, died in the palace where his mother and sister-in-law had drawn their last breath. Pedro V. had watched at his brother's bedside with unremitting care. Five days later he died in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

Three days later his next brother Luiz returned home from abroad. His father told him that he was now king. "I have lost my brother and my liberty!" exclaimed the sailor prince. He was to lose yet another brother. The remaining infantes John and Augusto were attacked by the fever which

had carried off Pedro and Ferdinand. A thrill of dismay and horror ran through the city. Poison was at work, it was generally said, and by most the assassin was believed to be the prime minister, the marquis of Loulé, whose children were the king's cousins. The streets that gloomy winter-time resounded with cries of "Death to Loulé!" A medical examination established the minister's innocence and left him in power. The infante Augusto recovered; but John lay dying. On Christmas night the municipality of Lisbon implored Dom Luiz to leave the fatal palace. He obeyed, and, escorted by thousands of his subjects bearing torches, proceeded from the Necessidades to Caxias on the Tagus. Two nights later, his brother lay dead; and so only two of his five sons were left to Ferdinand of Coburg.

He had another tie to life. He was not cold, as were most of his house. His marriage with Donha Maria had been a political match, and in the domestic calm of his wedded life his passions had only slumbered. On regaining his freedom, his nature knew an Indian summer. From his box at the San Carlos theatre, the widower king witnessed Verdi's opera, *Un ballo in maschera*. His ear was charmed by the voice of the girl who acted the part of the page Oscar; her grace delighted him, and when her black eyes met his they shot love into his empty heart. Who was she? He was soon told—Mademoiselle Elise Frederica Hensler, and, as he was afterwards to learn, the daughter of an Austrian tailor settled in Boston. The singer was then about twenty-five years old, endowed with the artist's temperament and the artist's gift of tongues. It was soon known that the



CHARLOTTE, EMPRESS OF MEXICO.

king-father was madly in love with her, and that she had accepted his protection. In Portugal there was no need to make a mystery of such things.

Thus in his mellow middle-age, Ferdinand lived in his noble castle of Cintra, surrounded with his books and pictures, cheered by the love of a beautiful woman and the unaffected goodwill of his son's people. He enjoyed all the sweets and none of the cares of kingship. Few men have drawn such a prize in the world's lottery. All this happiness the statesmen of Europe strangely expected him to give up for the mere lust of power.

In October, 1862, there was another European throne to let. Otto of Bavaria, who after so much discussion and negotiation had been made king of Greece, had proved a failure. He was expelled by a bloodless revolution and shipped off to Trieste. As he sailed in an English ship, Duke Ernest tells us, public opinion in Germany was very much inclined to look on the revolution as concocted by the English cabinet. "This opinion was, moreover, strengthened by the circumstance that the candidature of Prince Alfred [better known as the duke of Edinburgh] had been immediately started in Greece, and that a sudden enthusiasm had arisen for the still-so-youthful son of the English queen—such as could hardly be comprehended except through the influence of English friends of Greece." These suspicions were absurd and unwarranted. In 1832 it been agreed that the Grecian crown should never be worn by a member of the reigning house of England, France, or Russia, and this principle these powers hastened to reaffirm. The Greeks wanted Prince Alfred, because they

supposed he would secure them the Ionian Isles and the steady support of the great sea power.

This prince being ineligible, somebody at Downing Street suggested Ferdinand of Portugal. He had had more experience than any man living in dealing with revolutions and running a state on an exhausted treasury. It was supposed, too, that he would welcome a return to active authority, and that the death of his sons would have made him glad to leave Portugal. Besides, Duke Ernest suggests, the English government might have been glad to remove so experienced and at times rebellious a counsellor from the side of the Portuguese throne.

Ferdinand, however, it was rumoured, would not rise to the bait. "I feared from the beginning," wrote King Leopold on Christmas Eve, 1862, to his nephew at Gotha, "that Ferdinand would not accept. In his place, I would *secure* the Portuguese position, and accept the thing as a *voyage pittoresque*, with the intention of soon appointing a substitute, in case things should turn out unpleasant. That is the only sensible way of trying the thing. In my time I had all my English prospects reserved to me; the Portuguese ought to do the same for Ferdinand. But he himself will not be willing. Since they urged it in England, I sent J. Devaux, van Pradt's nephew, to Lisbon. I intended my arguments to make an impression. I even went so far as to say that the beauty of the Levantine women was known to be very great."

The retired king probably thought the beauty of his opera singer was greater. Politely but firmly he declined the proffered crown. He knew better, says

his ducal cousin, than to trust himself in a foreign land to English diplomacy. His refusal was very widely deplored outside Portugal, where every one was glad of it. The right place for him, the nation was agreed, was behind his son's throne.

Palmerston still thought of giving the vacant throne to a Coburg prince. His opinion of the house had changed since he expressed it to Bulwer in regard to the Spanish marriages. Failing Ferdinand, the best king of Greece would be Duke Ernest. Queen Victoria was greatly pleased that her late husband's brother should be chosen. In a letter to her uncle she dwelt in the friendliest way upon the establishment of a new royal branch of the house of Coburg, whilst the possession of the little duchy itself would revert to her son Alfred.

The Nestor of Europe was also in favour of the project; in fact, he told this nephew that he preferred him to the other. But he warned him as he had warned Ferdinand, to secure himself a safe retreat and not to sacrifice the ducal substance for the royal shadow. The policy of the Coburgs was always the same—to venture nothing and to keep everything. Ernest, having no children, would have had to adopt one of the princes of his house as heir to the Greek throne; and he therefore proposed to Palmerston that he should simply take the title of regent of Greece, holding the kingdom in trust for this heir, and retaining for himself his ancestral duchy. He stipulated that if he accepted the crown for himself or for an heir, it should be subject to certain guarantees by the powers. King Leopold did not see why the Greeks should object to be ruled by a duke of Saxe-Coburg-

Gotha, since the English had submitted to the rule of five kings of Hanover in succession—three of these, too, vassals of the German emperor.

However, the English cabinet thought the conditions proposed quite unacceptable, and for the fourth and last time the crown of the Hellenes was refused by a descendant of Ernest the Pious. In the following March it was assumed by the Danish prince whom we knew as Georgios I. His dowry presented by England was the coveted Ionian Islands. "That this cup was spared me, I always regarded as a piece of great good fortune," writes his highness of Gotha; had he lived to witness the misfortunes of Greece in 1897 he would have found additional reasons for thankfulness.

Ferdinand profited by his freedom from responsibility to stir at last beyond the bounds of his adopted country. He visited Seville, and there made the acquaintance of the Duc de Montpensier, who since the revolution of 1848 had made his wife's country his own. In another year the "king-father" was the guest of Queen Isabella at Aranjuez, and of Victor Emmanuel at Florence. The Italian king's daughter, Maria Pia, had married his son, Luiz; the union again illustrating the attachment of the house of Coburg to the cause of liberal monarchy.

In Paris, on his way to Italy, Ferdinand made a friend of Napoleon III. In 1854 the empress Eugenie had observed to his cousin Ernest that Spain had only one hope and that was King Ferdinand. The emperor, in spite of his action in the matter of the *Charles et Georges*, had entertained a strong liking and respect for the young king Pedro. In conversation with

Prince Albert, he had expressed his desire to see the Iberian peninsula united under one head—the king of Portugal. The prince consort had pronounced the scheme impracticable, owing to the mutual antipathy of the two peoples concerned, and objected to it as against English interests. The dream was one which had been and still is indulged by a good many Spaniards and Portuguese, though it was generally unpopular in the smaller kingdom. The project certainly presents advantages to both sides. Portugal would lose thereby a formidable foe and gain a valuable ally; Spain would benefit by the use of the splendid port of Lisbon and by trade with the vast Portuguese colonial empire. The common origin and affinity of the two peoples are manifest, moreover, to every one but themselves, though the Portuguese are the more civilised by at least a century.

There had been a good deal of talk about the Iberian union in the forties and fifties, and it had become louder of late. The government of Isabella II. was tottering to its fall, and many Spaniards pointed to the king of Portugal as her fittest successor. When his faithful majesty visited Lisbon he was made the object of a flattering ovation, the significance of which he understood so well that he avoided the capital when he next journeyed into Spain.

Isabella, who was no fool, hit on a plan of outwitting the unionists or of identifying their aspirations with the interests of her house. In December 1866 she visited Lisbon, accompanied by her eldest boy, Alfonso, and her eldest girl and namesake. Augusto, the only remaining brother of Dom Luiz, was a simple-minded youth of nineteen, who delighted the

citizens of Lisbon by his habit of sucking his thumb during his public appearances. The wily Spanish queen calculated that if she could secure this promising prince as her daughter's husband, the unionist party, in the event of her being hurled from her throne, would probably place him and his wife upon it, and so keep it in the family; if, indeed, the Portuguese court did not feel compelled, in virtue of the alliance, to refuse any overtures from her enemies altogether.

To make Augusto and the young Isabel fall madly in love with each other was an easy task for one so skilled in such matters as her catholic and erotic majesty. The infantes wept scalding tears when the hour of separation came. The queen, much moved, proposed to Ferdinand that they should sanction the union of these two young hearts; but Ferdinand refused to do anything of the kind. Isabella persisted, and on her return to Madrid renewed her proposals in writing. But the king-father was inflexible. He heartlessly derided his son's passion; and the Spanish queen, mortified and disappointed, bestowed her daughter's hand on the count of Girgenti. Augusto was consoled for this bitter disillusionment by the dukedom of Coimbra—a title somewhat incongruous with his character, since the town is the seat of Portuguese learning.

Neither Ferdinand nor his eldest son wished to be drawn into the maelstrom of Spanish affairs. The long-impending catastrophe came in September 1868. Isabella and her children took refuge in France, and Marshal Prim formed a provisional government for Spain. There were several candidates for the vacant kingship. The most active of these was the duc de

Montpensier, who had been banished to Lisbon a few months before Isabella's downfall. He was coldly received by King Luiz, out of respect for the government of the neighbouring state; but he was well supplied with money, and foreseeing his recall to Madrid, busied himself in promoting his candidature and combating the designs of the unionist party. Like Isabella, he endeavoured at one time to circumvent these by marrying his eldest daughter to Dom Augusto. That inflammable prince was easily ensnared, but again his father cruelly interfered and packed him off to the country.

Ferdinand professed to favour Montpensier's pretensions to the Spanish throne; but the duke, we are assured by Castilian writers, did not cease to undermine the credit and repute of the Portuguese royal family. If we are to believe his political opponents, the Orleanist prince was almost as wicked as his father was represented to be by the English press. He bribed the palace servants to repeat scandalous gossip about the Portuguese court, and he paid journals in Madrid and Lisbon to circulate it. To him are ascribed the rumours that the Portuguese were shocked by Ferdinand's depravity and that Dom Luiz had been knocked on the head while prosecuting a suburban amour.

In spite of these machinations, and without any encouragement from Lisbon, their majesties of Portugal continued to be talked of in Spain as the best possible successors to the exiled Bourbons. The progressist party was all in their favour, and the republicans preferred them to any other monarchical candidate. Prim, who owed the Portuguese court

a grudge for their cold treatment of him while in exile, now forgot his resentment, and in January 1869 agreed with three of his colleagues—Sagasta, Figuerola, and Zorilla—to offer the crown to King Ferdinand.

As their ambassador, the statesmen selected Don Angel Fernandez de los Rios, a prominent political journalist, who had distinguished himself by his advocacy of the Portuguese project. His mission was to be considered strictly secret. Accordingly, when he reached Lisbon on January 17 he put up at the most out-of-the-way hotel he could find, and thence wrote to a grandee of the Portuguese court, the marquis de Niza, requesting leave to present to him a letter of introduction from a mutual friend.

The marquis, scenting mystery, appointed a meeting that afternoon in his own back garden. Having read the letter, he told De los Rios that he had already taken steps to obtain for him an audience of Dom Luiz. "But I want to see not Dom Luiz but his father," explained the envoy. Niza, divining the object of his mission, expressed his surprise, as he had always understood that Prim was in favour of the young king, who, he added, was the more likely to accept of the two. As to Dom Ferdinand he was now at Cintra, where he never received any one; however, the marquis promised to do his utmost to help the ambassador.

On the morning of the 19th the two politicians drove over to Lawrence's hotel, on the road from Cintra to Collares, and there Niza wrote the following note, addressed to the king-father: "Sir—only a reason of the utmost importance would urge me to solicit the favour of a few minutes' audience. I await

then your majesty's orders as your majesty's most obedient subject."

Having refreshed themselves with British-brewed tea, the two gentlemen laboured up the steep path leading to the Pena palace. The Spaniard complains of the heat, though even for an Englishman the walk is a cool enough one in January. Presently they came upon a group of the royal gardeners, and the marquis inquired for one of their number whom he knew, and to whom he proposed to entrust the note. Alas! the man was no longer in the king's service. However, presently a lad was discovered, who was persuaded to take a message from the marquis to one of Ferdinand's body servants. This man appeared at the end of a quarter of an hour, and promised to deliver the letter to the king. A few minutes afterwards, he returned with orders for the marquis to follow him.

Fernandez de los Rios waited for his companion outside the castle. Another quarter of an hour passed, and then Niza reappeared, making signs to him to follow him into a coppice close by. On being acquainted with the Spaniard's errand, Ferdinand had flatly refused to receive him, saying that any such proposal must be made publicly, and that even then nothing would induce him to agree to it. The marquis then repeated the flattering terms in which the envoy had spoken of his majesty, and pleaded that he should at least be allowed to present his letter from the provisional government. Ferdinand, moved by these entreaties, and still more by these flatteries, had then told the grandee to lead his friend into the coppice and to await him there.

"The marquis," says Fernandez de los Rios, "obeyed, and we stationed ourselves in the wood, talking to a gardener whose goodwill we had secured. In a short space of time there appeared, coming down a path, a tall, well-formed man, clad in a jacket and green velvet breeches, high riding-boots, and a black broad-brimmed hat—absolutely the outline of one of Vandyck's characters; red-and-white complexion, the face a little drawn, the features regular and well proportioned, the forehead smooth, the eyes dark, the glance mild, the beard and moustache red but flecked with grey, the countenance generally not very expressive, manner simple but dignified, movements agile—the appearance, in short, of a man of fifty-two, who might be taken for thirty-five or forty."

The ambassador having been presented by the marquis, handed the king a letter which he said was signed by four members of the provisional government. "I don't know that I ought to read it," objected Ferdinand; "you see I am Montpensier's friend, and this interview would not look well in the newspapers." De los Rios at once explained that his presence in Portugal was known only to those present, and that his mission was so much a secret that he must ask the king to return the letter he had given him. This his majesty did, and gave his word that he would treat its contents as confidential. The Spaniard then went on to paint his fitness for the vacant dignity in glowing terms, and promised him an enthusiastic welcome at Madrid.

Ferdinand listened with the nervous smile which he wore at such moments, and interrupted him by expressions of his loyalty to Montpensier. It was

a case of conscience, he told the ambassador ; nothing would shake his determination to refuse. " But if you are invited by the government, the cortes, and the people," persisted Don Angel, " will you say no ? " " I have told you that I can hold out no hope, that it is a matter of conscience, and that is my last word," replied the king and walked away. The marquis suggested that in speaking of a matter of conscience his majesty had probably in view the possible candidature of his own son ; and, encouraged by the reflection that his last petition had not been met by a direct negative, De los Rios started that night for Madrid.

There are some grounds, it seems to me, for suspecting that Ferdinand may now have thought of securing the crown he refused, not for Montpensier, but for the husband of his daughter Antonia—Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen. This prince had been vaguely suggested as a candidate as far back as October 1868, but the scheme had been dismissed by his father as impracticable. At all events, on March 7, that is within seven weeks of the interview at Cintra, the marquis of Niza informed De los Rios that he had been asked by the Vizconde de Seissal, a particular friend of the king-father, to bring the name of the German prince to the notice of Prim. The marquis did not hesitate to say that he believed the suggestion had emanated from his majesty ; a conviction which was in no way weakened when soon after Oldoini, the Italian minister at Lisbon, also began to talk to him about the fitness of the Hohenzollern prince for the vacant throne and of the pleasure it would give his own government and the Prussian to see him there. No attention

was paid by the Spanish regency to this suggestion at the time. If it really proceeded from Ferdinand, his majesty must have bitterly reproached himself in after years for having shown the dragon's teeth.

As the result of his envoy's report, Prim was inclined to dismiss Ferdinand altogether from his calculations, and resumed negotiations with the duke of Aosta, an Italian prince. The Spanish progressist party, however, knowing nothing of Fernandez's recent overtures, redoubled their efforts on behalf of the Portuguese king, in whom they professed to see the model of a constitutional sovereign. They demanded his election by the cortes, and proposed that if he objected to the ultimate union of the two crowns in the person of his eldest son, he should be allowed to nominate his own successor.

The partisans of Monarchy, being spiteful, announced that Ferdinand was declining his candidature through the embassy at Madrid. This reproach stung his majesty into a grave indiscretion. On April 6 he telegraphed to the Portuguese ambassador that he would refuse the crown of Spain if it were offered to him, and that he would not receive the commission which, it was reported, was on its way to Lisbon to solicit his acceptance. This message the Spanish cortes considered offensive to the dignity of their country. Sagasta coldly observed that as they had not yet determined what the form of government should be, it was perfectly obvious that the crown could not have been offered to Dom Ferdinand or to anybody else.

The indiscreet king could not, of course, betray the writers of the invitation he had lately received ;

and four days later had to write a long explanation, stating that he had been misled by false rumours, and that his object had been to avoid refusing any offer made him in the name of the noble Spanish people. He expressed his regret that ^{his} name should continue to be mentioned in this connection; but wound up by professing his gratitude for the appreciation shown him in Spain.

This letter, not so much by its matter as by its manner, to some degree soothed the touchy Spaniards, who had indeed expected emperors and princes to jostle each other in their eagerness to secure the throne of Spain; but the episode encouraged Montpensier to renew his intrigues against Ferdinand. His agents in ^{the} Mademoiselle Hensler, with apprehensions ^{that} royal lover might have to repudiate her ^{as} king of another country. It is easy, ^{to} guess to which side her influence inclined. Montpensier, it is alleged, next approached the ^{Portuguese} al nuncio at Lisbon, and pointed out that Ferdinand's relations with the lady were notorious and ^{could} bring royalty into disrepute. The churchman, who no doubt suspected the duke's real motives, was obliged to remonstrate with the august offender; and, nothing loath, the king-father of Portugal formally espoused the Boston tailor's daughter on June 10, 1869. On the same day, Duke Ernest conferred on the bride the title of Countess of Edla in the peerage of Saxe-Gotha.

The Portuguese court was shocked, as Montpensier hoped the Spaniards would be. Queen Maria Pia, like other virtuous women, had married a man she did not know, for the sake of his crown; she was

naturally disgusted when a woman who had given herself to the man she loved for no stated price was presently rewarded by him with a wedding-ring and a lifelong contract. These transactions, in commercial phrase, knock the bottom out of the matrimonial market, and tend to ruin marriage as a trade. Maria Pia promptly turned her back on the wife of her husband's father, and the courtiers obediently did the same. The men no doubt agreed with the professional wives that Ferdinand had set a bad example: they might be expected to marry their mistresses next, perhaps without a dowry.

However, the king's father could not be excluded from court functions, and wherever he went he took his wife with him. On the occasion of some festival the countess found herself waiting in an antechamber of the palace with a crowd of diplomatists, functionaries, and courtiers. When the doors were thrown open no one offered an arm to King Ferdinand's wife. Seeing this, the Spanish ambassador politely offered his escort, and led the lady into the hall. Every seat was occupied, according to instructions issued overnight. The Portuguese snobs stuck fast to their chairs and grinned. The ambassador motioned to his wife, who at once surrendered her seat to the countess; whereupon, to make the insult still more marked, a number of courtiers sprang to their feet and offered their places to her Spanish excellency. *Noblesse oblige* — sometimes. It is soothing to remember that the queen, who is said to have planned this contemptible trick, was herself badly snubbed at certain courts because of her father's spoliation of the church.

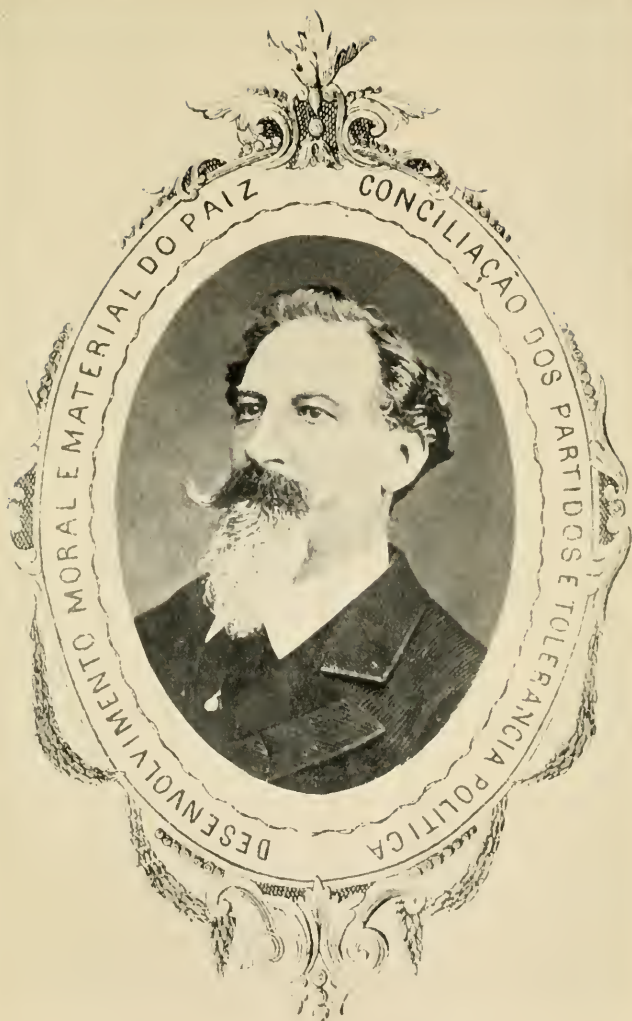
Ferdinand's refusal was followed by consequences disastrous to Spain and to Europe. From across the Pyrenees, Napoleon III. watched the course of events with increasing anxiety. He was, of course, bitterly hostile to the candidature of the son of Louis Philip, and prepared to prevent his election at all costs. He returned at the beginning of 1869 to his old dream. To Saldanha, who was appointed Portuguese minister in Paris in the middle of February, he expressed his desire that Dom Luiz should assume the crown of Spain. If he did not, complications would arise which would lead to the establishment of a republic, probably in both the peninsular states. The emperor said that the British government favoured his scheme, but that Dom Luiz had refused to entertain it. The marshal, though opposed to the union of the two crowns, had no objection to seeing his master exchange one for the other; but before he could take any action, he heard of the proposals made to Ferdinand, and, to his great chagrin, of their rejection. Then came Ferdinand's unfortunate telegram, and his second marriage which, as his secret enemy had foreseen, lost him a great deal of sympathy and support in Spain. Then, in despair of getting a member of the Italian or Portuguese royal houses to accept the kingship, Prim in an evil hour turned again to Leopold of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, the husband of Ferdinand's daughter indeed, but also a cousin of the king of Prussia.

Here was a candidate more obnoxious to France even than Montpensier. Napoleon informed Bismarck that he would not tolerate a Prussian prince upon the throne of Charles V., and at the same time

fomented a brisk agitation on behalf of Dom Luiz. In Portugal itself any proposal tending towards the union of the two countries aroused the most frantic opposition. Notwithstanding, one of Montpensier's organs in Madrid did not scruple to announce that the king had accepted the crown of Spain and would hand over that of Portugal to his eldest son, with a view to the ultimate settlement of both on the same head. This report, as it was meant to, caused tremendous excitement in the little kingdom.

In a letter to Loulé, his prime minister, dated September 26, 1869, Dom Luiz disavowed any such intention in the most emphatic terms. "I was born a Portuguese," he proudly declared, "and a Portuguese I will die." This pronouncement, to Napoleon's disgust and Montpensier's delight, wounded the national pride of the Spaniards and dispelled the hopes of the Iberian party. Castelar lost all interest in the Portuguese monarchs, and ridiculed the efforts of the government to find any king at all for Spain. An hereditary monarchy, he argued, to be real must have an historical basis: it must have grown up with the nation. It could not be artificially created. Spain had torn up her ancient institutions by the roots and expelled her old line of kings. You could not manufacture a Spanish sovereign out of a foreign prince. A republic was inevitable.

"There shall never be a republic while I am alive," declared Prim, prophetically. He feared the dismemberment of Spain. He continued his quest for a king, negotiating with several princes at the same time. Meanwhile Montpensier, for all his desperate efforts, dropped out of the running. Goaded to madness by



FERDINAND, KING-CONSORT OF PORTUGAL.



his wife's cousin, Don Enrique, he shot that royal republican in a duel. Napoleon was glad to hear that he had spoiled his chances, but there still remained the more formidable Hohenzollern. Saldanha wrote to Ferdinand, urging him to retract his refusal; and soon after he followed his letter to Lisbon.

There, being suspected of unionist sympathies, he received a very doubtful welcome from the populace. But the octogenarian marshal was not to be turned from his objects by frowns or hisses. He saw that Prim's indiscriminate negotiations would bring on war between France and Prussia, and perhaps engulf Spain and Portugal. On Ferdinand, he was convinced, the salvation of the peninsula depended. In Loulé's ministry he thought he saw an obstacle in the path of peace. On the night of May 18, 1870, he bade six regiments follow him to the palace, and straightway compelled the king to dismiss his ministers and to entrust him with the formation of a new cabinet. The very next morning, Adolphe Ollivier, the brother of the French premier, arrived at Lisbon with a letter from the emperor, requesting his faithful majesty to induce his father to accept the crown of Spain.

But the marshal's rude methods had prejudiced the court against any schemes which he was known to favour; Queen Maria Pia even said that he ought to be tried by court-martial; and Fernandez de los Rios, who was now ambassador at Lisbon, did not care at such a moment to approach Ferdinand a second time. The old man, hasty perhaps, but the wisest of them all, knew that the sands were running out. On July 2 Prim avowed his adoption of the

candidature of Prince Leopold. "France will not tolerate it," replied Mercier de Lostende, the French ambassador at Madrid. Then followed Ollivier's warlike declaration to the French chambers.

On July 9 Saldanha again wrote to Ferdinand, reminding the gravity of the situation. "If war should break out," he said, "the state of perfection to which firearms have been brought, hundreds of thousands of victims will undoubtedly be the consequence. . . . Whether the prince of Hohenzollern ascends the Spanish throne, or whether the republic is proclaimed, rivers of blood must inundate Europe. . . . Your majesty by accepting the crown of Spain will occupy one of the most glorious situations in the history of the world." On the same day, Fernández de los Rios received a telegram from his colleague in Paris, telling him that the powers would see in a Portuguese candidature a way out of the perils which menaced Europe.

Saldanha and Olózaga were right. An intimation by Ferdinand that he was ready to accept the offer made him at Cincinnati would have relieved the French government from the necessity, real or imagined, of demanding reparation from Prussia against the renewal of Hohenzollern candidature. But the Coburg king wanted to be king of Spain, and wanted still less to compete against his own son-in-law. Knowing what pressure was being brought to bear on his majesty, the Spanish ambassador asked the government for instructions. On the 12th Prussia ordered him to receive any advances from the king in a favourable spirit, but to refer them to Madrid. On the same day Leopold formally declined to allow

his name to be submitted to the cortes, and on the morrow Ferdinand, being free to act, invited De los Rios to a conference at the Necesidades. After a long discussion, he left the envoy still in the dark as to his real intentions. On the same day, Benedetti approached the king at Ems with his demand for guarantees.

On the 15th Ferdinand de los Rios telegraphed to Prim, "I can at last say that Dom Ferdinand accepts." Prim replied forty-eight hours later, impressing on his agent the need for secrecy. Secrecy! The news should have been telegraphed to every court in Europe. It might not even then have been too late. While Ferdinand and the ambassador were talking things over at Cintra, the French ministers were drawing up their declaration of war. On the 17th it was signed by the emperor; on the 19th it was delivered at Berlin. Accepting a crown too soon, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg plunged Belgium and Holland into war; hesitating to accept one, his nephew, forty days later, brought on a vaster, bloodier, more fateful conflict.

The announcement which, true or false, might have averted the catastrophe at the eleventh hour, was in fact premature. As far as the Spanish government was concerned, Prim's caution was therefore justified. Ferdinand had simply discussed the conditions under which he would accept the crown. He had looked forward to an old age of lettered ease, threatened by the love of his adored wife. Place and power had no charms for him. But urged by old Saldanha, who ceased not to insist on the danger to Portugal of a possible Spanish republic, he stated

his conditions on July 26. He must be elected by at least three-fourths of the cortes ; his candidature must be approved by England, France, and Portugal ; the same pension as he enjoyed in the latter country must be guaranteed to him in case he should abdicate his new throne ; provision must be made that the crowns of Spain and Portugal should never be united in the same person, and the countess of Edla must on all except official occasions be treated as his consort.

Prim, now eager to secure him, assured him that all the personal conditions might be taken as conceded, but that it was impossible to reckon on the support of more than two-thirds of the cortes ; he implored the king to accept the crown at once and to leave the political conditions to be settled on his behalf by the Portuguese government. Saldanha joined his prayers to Prim's, and promised upon his honour to adjust all the points left open to his majesty's satisfaction.

Ferdinand, however, was influenced by the marshal's political rival, Fontes Pereira de Mello, who was a determined opponent of the Iberian union. The king replied on the 30th, insisting on all the conditions without reserve. In vain the ambassador argued that the question of the succession could be determined only by the cortes, and that the cortes could not vote for a candidate whose name had not been submitted to them. Prim made every concession within his power, straining his constitutional authority almost to breaking point. He promised that the two nations should never be brought under one crown without the consent of both. This was not enough. Fontes de Mello persuaded Ferdinand that

he must dictate to posterity and keep the two peoples apart for all time, whether they liked it or not.

Saldanha made a final effort, and proposed that Dom Augusto should be named his father's successor upon renouncing for himself and his descendant all right to the Portuguese throne. "Poor Augusto!" said Ferdinand, and shook his head. He was willing to refer the matter to the heads of parties, who refused to give an opinion on the ground that it concerned him and not the state. On August 14 Prim told Fernandez de los Rios that he considered the negotiations at an end.

A fortnight later Saldanha was dismissed from office and appointed ambassador at London, where he died in 1876. Spain, as he had predicted, became, after Amedeo's brief rule, a republic. That the republican movement did not spread to Portugal was not Ferdinand's fault. To us, as to Saldanha, it seems that he missed playing a noble part in history such as is offered to few princes. He enjoyed the sweets of sovereignty and shirked its responsibilities. A king is of no use at all if he will not wear a crown of thorns; the nations cannot always guarantee a wreath of roses. In an official sense he had, of course, no duty towards Spain; but as a Portuguese prince he must have known that the fate of the two countries was closely intertwined, and he cannot be acquitted of responsibility for the terrific struggle which changed the face of western Europe.

No pangs of remorse seem to have troubled the autumn of his days. He filled his palaces with things rare and beautiful, ransacked Europe for choice bric-à-brac, armour, and antique furniture. Through

him many thousands of pounds must have been transferred from the pockets of the Portuguese taxpayer into the coffers of Wardour Street. He delighted especially in books, pamphlets, and other publications which had been prohibited or censored by governments. Of these he acquired in course of time a complete and amazingly curious collection, which must have enlightened him, by the way, as to the opinion entertained of his own family in certain quarters. While he played the Mæcenæ, his wife played the lady bountiful. The spell which she had thrown around him never waned. Next to exhibiting his treasures, the old virtuoso loved to talk of the beauty and wisdom of his wife, in season and out of season, to all and sundry, proclaiming her supreme excellence.

We catch a glimpse of this happy pair in the year 1877. General Grant, travelling round the world, made a call at Lisbon, and was introduced to King Ferdinand, now a stately old gentleman past sixty. The general was next presented to the countess of Edla, who expressed her pleasure at meeting so distinguished a countryman. She considered the country of her father's adoption her own. She exhibited her husband's collections to the distinguished strangers, on whom she made a most agreeable impression. Later on, General Grant and his wife took tea at Cintra, and tasted the excellent tea-cake which the countess explained she had made herself—an assurance which satisfied Mrs. Grant that the ex-opera singer must be a virtuous woman. Probably the artist king was not sorry to part with a visitor with whom he must have had very little in common.

King Ferdinand and the Crown of Spain 293

On December 15, 1885, Ferdinand died, surrounded by his family. His death was caused by cancer in the face, accelerated in its ravages by a fall from his horse. He was sixty-nine years and two months old.

CHAPTER XIII

FERDINAND, PRINCE OF BULGARIA

FERDINAND OF COBURG KOHARY died in 1851 in his sixty-seventh year, having seen his son mount the throne of Portugal and his younger brother that of Belgium. The overthrow of the Orleans monarchy had so far justified the old conservative's reluctance to marry his children into that house, but the alliance was by no means unlucky to his descendants. His daughter, the duchess of Nemours, was much beloved by her cousin, Queen Victoria ; and her majesty has left us a poignant account of her visit to Claremont two days after her friend's death, in the thirty-fifth year of her age, on November 10, 1857.¹

The duchess's eldest son, Gaston, bore the title of Comte d'Eu. He joined his uncle Montpensier in Spain, and studied at the artillery academy at Seville. He insisted on serving with the Spanish army in Morocco, and proved himself worthy of his courageous sire and grandsire. In 1864 he was married to the infanta Isabella, the eldest child and heiress of the emperor Pedro II. of Brazil. Still ambitious of military glory, the count commanded the Brazilian army in the later stages of the desperate though unequal war with Paraguay. He was so reckless of his person

¹ Letter to Lord Clarendon, dated November 12, 1857.

that his aides-de-camp had on more than one occasion to lay hold of his horse and haul him by main force out of danger. On March 1, 1870, he finally defeated the heroic Paraguayans and killed their president in the hotly contested battle of the Aquidaban.

But with the valour of his race, the count inherited the conservative sympathies of his father and the cold haughtiness of his mother's house. He was reserved and proud, and made few friends. This was not the kind of prince relished by the subjects of the intensely liberal and affable Dom Pedro. The infanta, too, became more and more infected with her husband's clerical and absolutist ideas. The Brazilians foresaw that the crowned republic of Dom Pedro would change at his death into a monarchy of the European type. The rumour that the old emperor was about to abdicate in his daughter's favour brought these apprehensions to a head. On November 15, 1889, the republic was proclaimed, and two days later the whole imperial family was on its way back to Europe. For better or for worse (and perhaps in the case of Brazil it was for worse), America had done with kings.

August, old Ferdinand's second son, inherited his vast estates in Austria. He was the handsomest man, perhaps, at the imperial court, and had won his spurs in Algeria, fighting under the French flag. By his wife, the princess Clémentine, he had one daughter and three sons, Philip, Louis, and Ferdinand.

Philip succeeded to the ancestral patrimony on the death of his father in 1881. He married Louise, the eldest daughter of Leopold II., king of the Belgians, very much against her will, it is said. The marriage at any rate proved unhappy. The princess having

declared that she would never live with her husband again, was in 1878 alleged to be insane, and confined in a sanatorium in Saxony. Her insanity consisted mainly in her passion for dress and her boundless extravagance. Count Mattachich Keglevich, a Croatian officer, who had distinguished himself by his devotion to her, was put under arrest about the same time. As soon as he was free, he set to work to accomplish the liberation of his mistress. On August 11, 1904, her highness eluded the vigilance of her keepers, and presently appeared in Paris in the company of the gallant count. She had a good many unpleasant things to say about courts and princes, and made it plain that royal women are regarded merely as articles of merchandise. Though she and her husband are catholics, they were pronounced to be divorced at Coburg in 1906. The princess renounced her membership of the Saxon house, much more readily than her creditors gave up their claims to her share of her mother's fortune. She was indirectly, therefore, a party to the lawsuit which disgraced the last years of Leopold II.'s reign.

Philip's next brother, Louis, married another daughter of the Brazilian emperor, and died at Carlsbad in 1907. As usual, the lucky star of the Coburgs shone above the youngest of the brothers.

Prince Ferdinand Charles Maximilian Leopold Marie, grandson of Ferdinand of Coburg Kohary and of King Louis Philip, second cousin of the late king Edward VII. of England, first saw the light at Vienna, in the stately Coburg palace, on February 26, 1861. He was idolised by his mother, Clémentine. She saw crowns hovering over his cradle, though only an

unimaginable series of catastrophes could have cleared him a way to any of the thrones occupied by his kinsmen. But the princess could not believe that the sun of the Coburgs had set. There were still kingdoms in the making in eastern Europe, and the world was at least no more settled than after the congress of Vienna. Clémentine determined that her Benjamin should go in for the kingly profession. He was not very robust ; his face was pale and, like his uncle of Portugal, his nerves would twitch of their own accord. He was persuaded to enter the Austrian cavalry as a lieutenant in the 11th Hussars, but he was never at ease in the saddle and exchanged into the infantry. A soldier, his mother argued, was more likely to be selected for a throne than a civilian.

But a soldier Ferdinand never has become. His tastes, so far as they differed from those of any Austrian noble of great wealth, were scientific in an amateurish way. He early developed an interest in what used to be called natural history, and found pleasure in collecting birds alive and stuffed. As well as he knew how, he prepared himself for the destiny which his mother was sure awaited him. He learned a great many languages, for of course he could not tell which tongue would be that of his conjectural subjects. He was taken by his clever mother from court to court, and presented to all his exalted relatives. He was fortunate enough to know his excellent grandmother, Marie Amélie, the ex-queen of the French ; with Duke Ernest he was, of course, familiar ; he represented his house at the coronation of Alexander III. ; he cultivated the society of the diplomatists, Count Nigra and Prince Lobanov. He travelled in Greece

and Asia Minor, and visited his cousin the comte d'Eu in Brazil. All this must have been pleasant, and served to advertise the fact of his existence in the political world.

"By the time Ferdinand was twenty," says a recent writer possessed apparently of inside knowledge,¹ "his education was complete, and Machiavelli's own 'Prince' was as nothing to him. He could justify with the most specious reasoning political coups of the most diverse sort; and he had solutions at hand for every imaginable political problem—this by the mere force of memory, for he was not at all interested in politics. He knew how to argue with aristocrats, also with democrats; and he could talk for the hour together concerning the comparative merits of a monarchy and a republic. He had a rare gift for talking even then; he could bandy *bons-mots* and scatter *doubles-entendres* around with a dexterity that dazzled those whom it did not shock. Then he could flatter and he could cajole; he could backbite, too, with curious skill, tearing reputations to rags. He was by no means a pleasant young man, in fact, even at twenty, excepting in the eyes of his mother. She looked on him as a sort of paragon; he was her own handiwork, and she was immensely proud of him. She had never a doubt that she had equipped him fully from top to toe with the very latest devices for ruling successfully over all sorts and conditions of men, and making them happy. Her own trouble was that there seemed none for him to rule over, none for him to make happy."

¹ Edith Sellers. See her valuable article, "Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria," *Fortnightly Review*, November 1910.

If Princess Clémentine actually tried to instruct her son in the art of making people happy, she must have understood the real duties and theory of kingship better than most people. According to one concept, which I may call the imperial, it is the business of a sovereign to live in great outward splendour and to occupy himself in extending his authority, for no particular reason, over other peoples, whether they like it or not. The other type of king is the democratic or constitutional, whose duty it is to reign but not to rule; which means that he acts as a kind of glorified secretary to the titular representatives of a majority of his partially educated and dimly conscious adult male subjects of the property-owning sort.

The former type of monarch appeals, perhaps, to the boyish imagination; the latter to those possessed of no imagination at all. I doubt if, with all her goodwill, Louis Philip's daughter knew how to make a king of another and nobler sort. Not in frequenting embassies or in playing at soldiers consists the training of the true king, but in personal experience of the life and hardships of every variety of his subjects. European sovereigns know less about the realities of existence than the simplest country parson.

Ferdinand was seventeen years old when the sword of Russia carved out a principality for the Bulgarians, intended to be the nucleus of a state conterminous with their nationality. The principality, meanwhile, acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the sultan and the very real overlordship of the Tsar. In 1879 the time came to choose a prince. Clémentine must have lamented the extreme youth of her son, though no candidate would have had a chance without

Russia's support ; and in fact the Tsar secured the election of his wife's nephew, Alexander of Battenberg, a Prussian officer only three years older than Ferdinand, who had fought well in the Turkish war.

The new prince belonged to a family which soon threatened to rise as high and as fast as the Coburgs themselves. He was the second son of Prince Alexander of Hesse Darmstadt and his morganatic wife, the countess Hauke, whose brother, under the name of Bossak, had distinguished himself as an insurgent leader in the Polish campaign of 1863. In 1884 Louis of Battenberg, the eldest son, married Queen Victoria's granddaughter, Victoria of Hesse, and became an admiral in the British navy. Another brother, Henry, was the husband of Princess Beatrice of the Isle of Wight, and the father of the present queen of Spain.

The luck of the Battenbergs is said to have exasperated Clémentine, who considered that her son, as a Coburg, had a prior claim on all the seats of the mighty and all the high places in the temple. She and Ferdinand, I imagine, followed the march of events in the Balkans with unabated interest. They must have thrilled with excitement when Alexander, in defiance of treaties, entered Philippopolis and proclaimed the annexation of Eastern Roumelia to Bulgaria ; they must have stood on tiptoe with expectation during the war with Servia, only to have their hopes dashed to the ground by the Battenberge's triumph at Slivnica. Presently these revived. Alexander's victories cost him dear. His independence had estranged him from Russia, and his soldiers,

despite his military successes, believed that he was imperilling the nation.

On the night of August 21, 1886, a party of officers entered the palace at Sofia, disarmed and arrested the prince, and hurried him on a steamer to the Russian frontier. The abduction was not approved by the nation. A regency was established, and Alexander, having been located with some difficulty at Lemberg in Galicia, was invited to return. He did so; but on reaching Rustchuk, he foolishly telegraphed to St. Petersburg: "Russia gave me my crown; it is into the hands of her sovereign that I am ready to surrender it." The Tsar took him at his word. Came the reply: "I cannot approve your return to Bulgaria, foreseeing from it disastrous consequences for a much-tried country. I shall abstain from all interference in the sad state to which Bulgaria has been reduced, so long as you remain there. Your highness will know how to act. I reserve judgment as to what may be imposed on me by the venerated memory of my father, the interest of Russia, and the peace of the East."

The autocrat's veiled threat left the unfortunate prince no liberty of action. The friendship of Russia he deemed essential to the existence of Bulgaria, and he was the living obstacle to that friendship. Having obtained an assurance from the Russian consul-general that the independence of the principality would be respected, he laid down his crown for the second time, and quitted Sofia on September 2, 1886. He was granted by his Hessian uncle the title of Count of Hartenau. He married a singer, Mlle. Loisinger, and died in 1893, at the age of thirty-six, leaving a son and a daughter.

Russia gained nothing by her selfish repudiation of her old protégé. At the head of the regency to which he had resigned his powers, stood Stepan Stambolov, the ablest man the Balkan states have as yet produced. He personified his country—he was obstinate, courageous, shrewd, unscrupulous, ruthless. His policy was Bulgaria for the Bulgarians, and he began work as regent by purging the army of all the officers suspected of Russian sympathies. The Tsar refused to recognise the regency, and sent General Kaulbars to Sofia as his high commissioner. Stambolov pursued his way resolutely, and convened the Sobranje or national assembly. He engineered the elections and secured a big majority.

Kaulbars stumped the country, calling on the people to discard this tyrant and to return to their mother Russia. The regency announced that they would expel any foreigner meddling with local affairs. Completely baffled, the Russian general solemnly excommunicated the ungrateful little nation, and retired, withdrawing with him all the representatives of Russia. The Tsar's wrath hung like a cloud over the principality; but Stambolov was not in the least afraid. He knew that the jealousy of the other powers would keep her wrath in bottle. He continued to protest his devotion to Russia, but took care to secure the rejection of the Russian candidate for the vacant throne. This was Prince Nicolas Dadiani, one of the dispossessed rulers of Mingrelia, an aide-de-camp of the Tsar. Instead, the Sobranje voted the crown to prince Valdemar of Denmark, who refused it. Russia clamoured for the expulsion of the insolent regent, and vowed she would never recognise the elect of a packed assembly. Stambolov



FERDINAND, TSAR OF BULGARIA.

Photo by Pietzner, Vienna.

responded by sending out a deputation, composed of MM. Stoïlov, Grekov, and Kalchev, in search of a prince.

They found the doors of the European chancellories shut in their faces at the bidding of Russia ; but there were often conversations at the backdoor. Still, though this and that power were secretly favourable, no one seemed anxious to accept the crown of a state which was legally taboo. On the eve of their departure for Berlin, in December 1886, the delegates sat drinking beer in Ronacher's circus at Vienna. They were introduced to a Major Laabe, who turned the conversation on to the object of their mission, and delighted them by declaring that he knew the very man for the vacant post. Who was he ? " Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, an Austrian officer, the grandson of Louis Philip, young, rich, learned, wise, generous. . . ."

The delegates decided to suspend their departure, and were told that they could see the prince next day. Could his highness have inspired Major Laabe's apparently impromptu proposal ? It would seem so. At all events, when the delegates on the morning of December 14 reached his little country seat of Ebenthal, near the classic field of Austerlitz, they found him ready to receive them in some state. He wore the Coburg family order and the ribbon of the Annunciation. He consented to be nominated for the principship, provided the emperor of Austria approved his candidature. His majesty could raise no objection to it, and his son, the ill-starred Rudolph, gave a breakfast " to meet the future prince of Bulgaria."

Ferdinand, relying on the goodwill of Prince

Lobanov, said he was confident of securing the Tsar's approval. He was cruelly disappointed. At St. Petersburg his candidature was heard of with as much indignation as surprise. Russia still hoped to force the Mingrelian prince on the Bulgarian people, and in the meantime would not listen to any proposal from what she considered their usurping government.

Ferdinand hesitated. He hoped, perhaps, to conciliate the Tsar, and could not summon up courage to defy him. His want of pluck disappointed the delegates, who, after a tour of the capitals of Europe, returned to report to Stambolov. The failure of their efforts to find a prince revived the hopes of Alexander's numerous partisans, whose success, the regent knew, would bring on actual war with Russia. He turned again to Ferdinand, and sent Stoilov once more to offer him the crown. The prince temporised. He offered to go to Bulgaria as high commissioner till the powers confirmed his election. The Bulgarians wanted no more high commissioners; they wanted a prince—a king if he dared to take the title.

For four months Ferdinand oscillated between his fears and his ambition. His mother, we can well believe, ceased not to urge on him the bolder course. Stambolov determined to force his hand. He convened the Sobranje, which, obedient to his orders, on July 7, 1887, unanimously elected Ferdinand of Coburg, prince of Bulgaria.

A deputation started at once to apprise him of his election. His highness received them, as before, at Ebenthal. At a writing-table sat his mother, watching the culmination of her life's work. The Bulgarians were not favourably impressed with their new sovereign.

He looked nervous and delicate, a very different man from their old master, the soldier of Slivnica. In formal phrases they offered Ferdinand the crown of Bulgaria. Like his great uncle, Leopold, fifty-six years before, the prince hung back even when the prize he longed for was within his grasp. He thanked the delegates, but repeated that he could not mount the throne without the consent of their powers. The Bulgarians retired deeply chagrined. All they could say of their prince was, "*Il est très diplomate.*"

Ferdinand renewed his entreaties at St. Petersburg without avail. His election had been announced by the regents to the sultan as lord paramount, and by the Porte it had been communicated to the powers. Russia retorted that the election was void, and reminded the other signatories of the treaty of Berlin that in this matter they were bound by the attitude of any one of their number.

The prince-elect pondered on the situation. All the time his keen old mother urged him to pluck up his courage and not let this cup be dashed from his lips. Times had changed since Leopold had waited on the nod of the northern potentates. The people had a voice now in the disposal of their own blood and treasure, and nobody outside Russia had the least intention of risking his life to soothe the Tsar's offended dignity. The prince had read, too, the sneering comments of historians on his great-uncle's hesitation. He would not expose himself to such taunts. He talked in a big way about his call to save Bulgaria and his exalted mission, while in reality he probably told himself that he was the right man for a crown and meant to have it. In fairness

it must be said that his was no vulgar ambition. He had every advantage, every means of happiness, and every essential to a pleasant life within his grasp. The throne offered him was insecure, the country over which he proposed to rule, scarcely civilised, inhabited by a horde of ignorant boors; it contained nothing of the culture and amenities in which his scholarly soul revelled. "The will to power," if not to benefit mankind, was strong in Ferdinand of Coburg.

The die was cast. At four in the morning of August 9 he assisted at mass in the chapel of Ebenthal, and then quietly travelled as a second-class passenger towards the Servian frontier. The attempt at concealment was vain: he was shadowed throughout the journey by the secret police of Russia and Austria. He was joined *en route* by his friends the comte de Grenaud and the comte de Bourboulon, by a young Bulgarian student, named Stancioff, and by Herr Fleischmann, his former tutor. At Orsova he embarked on the Danubesteamer. Farther downstream, where the confluence of the Timok marks the boundary of the principality, a little steam yacht was seen approaching. It displayed the Bulgarian colours and from its deck came wafted the strident notes of Bulgaria's national anthem. It was the same vessel which had transported Alexander of Battenberg into exile. Aboard were Stambolov, his colleagues, and the leading functionaries. Ferdinand joined them on the deck. The prince and prince-maker looked at each other curiously and, it is said, with mutual distrust. From that first moment the Bulgarian Bismarck sought to overawe his sovereign, to remind him by his every word and gesture that on him the

safety of his throne depended. It was native and sheer weight of character against trained intelligence and finesse. "So long as you labour for the liberty and independence of the country," said the dictator, "you will enjoy the support of the people and the army." His highness remembered the words to the speaker's cost.

At Vidin he donned the white summer uniform of the Bulgarian army, and received the benediction of the orthodox church. In a proclamation dated August 12 he stated that having been chosen by the Bulgarian people for their ruler, he considered it a sacred duty to set foot in their country at the earliest possible moment, that he might devote his life to their happiness and prosperity. The sluggish Bulgars were stirred by the manifesto. Something like enthusiasm greeted the new prince as he travelled from town to town. At Trnovo, on August 14, he swore to observe the constitution, and reviewed the troops. He spoke of Bulgaria as free and independent, which delighted his people and exasperated the Russians; but he was careful to send a telegram to the sultan professing his devotion and declaring that he had assumed the crown in order to ensure the tranquillity of the Balkans. Thence he passed on to Sofia, the seat of government, a squalid, miserable place in those days, which was henceforward to be his home.

It is instructive to look back on those not-far-distant times, to note how the thunders rolled and the lightnings flashed round that clever young man's head, to leave him at last master of the situation. On August 22 Russia plaintively appealed to the

other powers to avenge this flagrant infraction of the treaty of Berlin—a request that came quaintly from a power which had coolly made the humiliation of France in 1871 a motive for repudiating her treaty obligations with England. The grand Turk was also offended, and told the intrusive prince that he had no business to enter Bulgaria without his consent and that of his good friends, the powers.

Ferdinand appeared very much distressed. He was very sorry—he would do anything to oblige their high mightinesses—except leave Bulgaria. Europe began to grow weary of the Tsar's repeated protests, which, like the episcopal fulminations from Rheims, seemed to make no one a penny the worse. Lord Salisbury and Count Kalnoky pointed out the uselessness of these remonstrances so long as they were unaccompanied by any proposals for the final settlement of the question. France, however, was courting Russia's favour at that time, and joined with her in urging the Porte to send General Ernroth, a Russian officer, as regent to Sofia, with orders to convoke a new national assembly. The sultan, however, had perceived by this time that an insubordinate vassal was better than one enslaved by Russia, and he diplomatically referred the proposal to the rest of the powers. As he had expected, it was disapproved, on the ground stated by Signor Crispi, that the new regent would not be received at Sofia, and that the powerlessness of the great powers would thus be demonstrated, unless they were prepared to uphold his authority by an international expedition.

As they were not, Ferdinand continued to reign in Bulgaria. Russia relapsed into sulky silence, but

plotted unceasingly to undermine his throne. The prince felt the ground trembling beneath his feet. At any moment he felt he might be kidnapped like his predecessor. Stoïlov, whom he had first entrusted with the formation of a ministry, felt himself unable to cope with the mischief brewing around and about, and resigned office almost immediately. Ferdinand reluctantly turned to Stambolov, the man he dreaded most in all Bulgaria, and Stambolov, who disliked the prince, with equal reluctance once more took the helm of state. His first care was to organise the elections for the next Sobranje. Knowing that Russian gold had been liberally distributed among his subjects, Ferdinand offered to contribute half a million francs to the political funds. The minister told him that roubles and francs would alike be wasted. He counted on the violence of his supporters to win him the victory, which was attested, in fact, by an enormous majority for the government.

This nefarious triumph helped to swell the Russian party with all Stambolov's opponents and victims. Constantinople, Odessa, Bucharest, and Belgrade swarmed with Bulgarian refugees, sworn to bring the intrusive prince and his terrible minister to the ground. In December a rising was attempted at Eski Zagra in Eastern Roumelia. It was immediately suppressed. In the same month the Russian captain Nabokov, with the approval of the Pan-Slavist committee at St. Petersburg, recruited a force among the Bulgarian exiles at Constantinople, and effected a descent near Sizeboli on the Black Sea. The prefect of Burgas hastily collected a force and advanced to meet him. In a pitched battle the filibusters were

routed, and their leader taken and shot. On his body was found a letter to Count Ignatiev, the Tsar's aide-de-camp, and other papers implicating the guilt of several Bulgarian officers. Stambolov at once seized six of these, including Major Popov, the commander of the first infantry regiment and one of the deputation which had offered the prince his crown. All the accused were found guilty by court-martial, and sentenced to death; a penalty which Ferdinand commuted to imprisonment.

The Coburg prince must often have ruefully contrasted his lot with that of his exalted kinsmen of Belgium and England. They, on mounting the steps of the throne, had not had to contend against the anger of Europe, an all-powerful minister, and innumerable conspiracies directed against their lives. The task of princes had not grown easier as the century grew old. For another two years the recollection of Stambolov's severity kept the malcontents in check; but then he contrived to alienate one of his most valuable and daring supporters, Major Panitza, by promoting another officer over his head. The secretary who signed the commission warned the minister that harm would come of it. Notwithstanding, Panitza was entrusted with the negotiation of an army contract with a Russian named Kalubkov. This man was accompanied by Jacobsen, the interpreter to the Russian embassy at Bucharest, and was undoubtedly an emissary of his government. The aggrieved major readily concocted with him a plot for the forcible dethronement and abdication of the prince. In his highness's room, the Pan-Slavist committee determined to place General Domontovics.

Zankov, Radoslavov, and other exiled enemies of Stambolov, declared themselves ready to recognise any government opposed to him.

By the end of January 1890 the major had secured promises of support from the officers of three-fourths of the garrison of Sofia, and of no less a person than Basmadziev, the chief of police. On the 24th he approached Kissov, the commandant of the capital, with an invitation to take an active part in the forthcoming revolution. The commandant's courage failed him, though he was already involved in the conspiracy. He stole away and reported the plot to Colonel Matkurov, an officer devoted to the prince. Panitza's servant was the next to betray him. Stambolov, after consultation with Matkurov, ordered Kissov and Basmadziev to arrest their own accomplice. He took the precaution of having them followed by five police officers whom he could trust, with fifty men. The night passed and he had no news. Unable to bear the suspense, he walked down to the major's house and found that he was safely under lock and key. His promptness had saved Ferdinand from the greatest peril which has before or since threatened him.

A state ball was to take place the next night. By Stambolov's advice, it was not countermanded. Of the officers present, numbers were known to be the doomed major's fellow conspirators. Yet they were compelled to show themselves in the gaily-lit halls, under the angry, reproachful eyes of their sovereign, and to meet the mocking glance of the minister who held their lives in the hollow of his hand.

He exacted but one, that of the ringleader, who

was tried by court-martial and sentenced to death on May 30. Panitzza was confident that the government would not dare to execute him. He ought to have known his old chief better, and to have remembered that the cultured Coburg prince had now had time to learn the ways of savage states. Ferdinand signed the death-warrant aboard his yacht as he was starting on a visit to his Austrian home. Panitzza was shot on the morning of June 28 at the camp of Bali Effendi, in the presence of the whole garrison. He had faced death so often that he was able to meet it now as an old friend. His accomplice, Kalubkov, was sentenced to imprisonment, but was immediately handed over to the Russian government.

Stambolov could have afforded to be more clement. Jacobsen, the interpreter, had sold him all the papers of the conspirators, and these he published in his own journal, the *Svoboda*. They proved that Russia had been a party to the major's plot, but had quarrelled with him because he would not consent to the selection of a prince by the Tsar's lieutenant or to the incorporation of Russian regiments with the Bulgarian army. M. Hitrovo, the Russian minister to Roumania, was represented as having paid ten thousand francs to two Bulgarian refugees to assassinate Ferdinand.

The immediate result of this abortive conspiracy was to strengthen the prince's hold upon his people. At the elections in September 1890, Stambolov's majority was substantially increased, and none of the opposition leaders obtained seats. The losers signified their dissent in the usual manner. After a council on the afternoon of March 27, 1891, most of the Bulgarian ministers adjourned to the café Panakh and remained

there till about eight o'clock. Stambolov walked towards his home in the company of one of his colleagues, an amiable, popular man called Belchev. The two men, though of very different complexion and features, were much the same in stature. In the darkness they could easily be mistaken, one for the other, and so they were. A pistol was fired. Stambolov cried, "Run, Belchev, after me!" He fled himself, and heard two more shots fired. He summoned the police at the next guard house, and returning to the scene of the attempt, they found Belchev lying just within the gates of the public gardens, where he had evidently fled for refuge. A bullet had pierced his heart.

It was a bad deed, but Stambolov's reprisals were worse still. He inaugurated a reign of terror. His four hundred spies were set to work to incriminate all those suspected of hostility to his government. The murder had taken place in front of the house of the ex-regent Karavelov, and this was good enough grounds for committing him to the old Turkish gaol. When his wife lodged a protest against such arbitrary acts with the consular body, she was placed under arrest in her own house. A man named Denu Teufecsiev was seized on suspicion and was beaten to death by the police officials. Four men were at last publicly executed for the murder. One of them was a veteran of the war of independence. Disdaining to die at the hands of the hangman, he slipped the noose round his neck and sprang off the scaffold into the eternal void. The torturing of the witnesses was reported by a Frenchman named Chadourne in the service of the Agence Havas. He was seized by order of

Stambolov, and expelled from the country. His government protested, and at last broke off all diplomatic relations with Bulgaria.

Unfortunately, Stambolov's enemies were of the same stuff as he, and were not to be cowed into submission by violence or severity. The terrible minister intercepted a letter which indicated Dr. Vulkovics, his agent at Constantinople, as the next victim. The doomed man refused to take any precautions. At the end of February 1892 he was stabbed to death in the streets of the Turkish capital. The police charged a Macedonian named Christo with the deed. He showed that it had been done by two Russians at the instigation of one Sismanov, a Bulgarian in the service of the Russian post-office. This man was arrested, but was, disgracefully enough, claimed as a subject by Russia and handed over to her representative. It was plain to all Europe that what the Russian government could not effect by statecraft they were prepared to effect by conspiracy and murder.

Stambolov strongly remonstrated with the Porte for having surrendered Sismanov, and insisted that his extradition should be demanded. This was to ask more than Turkey could dare; but her goodwill was not lacking towards her bold vassal. In August Stambolov was invited to visit Constantinople. He gladly responded, and started without the knowledge of any one in Bulgaria except Ferdinand. On his arrival he was received by the grand vizier, and despite the objections of the French minister, was admitted to an audience by the sultan. As a token of his esteem his majesty bestowed upon him a gold snuff-box set

with diamonds, and appointed him one of his honorary aides-de-camp. He sent his private secretary to bid him farewell at his departure, and ordered military honours to be paid to him at every station on Ottoman territory. Times had changed since the Bulgarian statesman had dared to enter Constantinople only under the protection of a Russian passport. He returned now to Sofia, honoured by his suzerain, and, as it seemed, to friends and foes alike, the real master of Bulgaria.

CHAPTER XIV

FERDINAND, TSAR OF BULGARIA

THE king always quarrels with the king-maker. His majesty is seldom deeply penetrated with gratitude, his creator is rarely conspicuous for tact. The king not unreasonably supposes that he has been brought upon the board to rule; the king-maker cannot believe that his creature can ever do without his help. It is an old story; and it was repeated in nineteenth-century Bulgaria. Stambolov, like most strong men, believed everybody else to be weak. He selected a prince almost at random, never dreaming that any of the brood could be more than a puppet. All that he heard and saw of Ferdinand before his accession must have confirmed this view. The rough Bulgarian peasant expected no manly qualities of a prince who could not sit a horse, who collected flowers and birds, and took particular care of his hands. His highness had never kicked a drunken soldier out of his father's inn or tramped after an army with a pack on his back. These were the things that made a man, reasoned Stambolov, with the boor's instinctive contempt for the man of culture.

As it happened, he had pitched upon one of the very few scions of royalty that could not be made

puppets. In sheer force of character, Ferdinand was probably inferior to his minister. He is not one of the strong men of whom we now hear so much. He had, however, an intellect immeasurably superior to the other's, and knew by the teachings of history and science that this must, in the long run, subdue brute force and strength of will. He had not risked the anger of Europe and the daggers of assassins to be denied the style of royalty outside his principality and the reality within it. But he was a stranger in a strange land, and Stambolov held all the keys to the situation. A common policy united both these natural enemies at the outset of the reign.

Ferdinand let his formidable minister fight his battles, while he watched the trend of affairs and strengthened his own position. He would spend hours reading the newspapers which were sent to him from every capital, and studied the ever-changing opinion of Europe. He busied himself with collecting information concerning all the chief men of Bulgaria, their opinions, their past, and their private life; and out of his own purse he maintained a well-organised secret service. He devoted much attention to the establishment of his court, and was laughed at for the elaborate ceremonial on which he insisted. There was probably policy as well as pride in this. Unrecognised abroad, almost powerless at home, he had in some way to impress his rude subjects with respect for their sovereign.

Stambolov affected none at all. He early perceived that his dummy prince had come alive, and would one day attempt to govern. He admitted his cleverness, but did not fear it. He sought on all occasions to

remind his highness that he had him under his thumb and meant to keep him there. The throne was necessary to Bulgaria, but he alone could uphold it. Stambolov was not altogether selfish in his ambition. He honestly believed the interests of the country to be bound up with his own. Any other pilot, he was sure, would drive the ship of state upon the rocks. Nothing but disaster, he told himself, could result from Ferdinand's meddling. All would go well if the people supported the throne and heeded not its occupant. That the Coburger should irritate the Bulgarians by his cold, haughty manners, was well; and not his least recommendation to the astute minister was his difference in religion from his subjects.

As a Roman catholic, Ferdinand had been from the first an object of suspicion to the devout, especially to the hierarchy. The Bulgarian bishops were, almost to a man, the strong partisans of Russia. When the prince arrived at Sofia, he was greeted by the metropolitan Clement, who immediately adjured him to make his peace with the Tsar. This prelate had presided over the provincial government formed after the kidnapping of Alexander. He was translated now to the lesser see of Trnovo, where he was closely watched by Stambolov's agents. At the beginning of 1889 he attended an episcopal synod at the capital. He and his brethren were requested to pay their respects to the sovereign. Simeon of Varna, the president, refused to do so, alleging that his highness had violated several of the canons of the Bulgarian church and had endeavoured to promote Romanism. The minister at once ordered the bishops to return to their dioceses; and when they disobeyed,

he had them arrested in their beds, and escorted home by gendarmes.

This daring defiance of the religious sympathies of the nation provoked a loud outcry. An appeal was made to the head of the church, the Bulgarian exarch at Constantinople; but his beatitude was a politic person by no means devoted to Russia, and he managed to pour oil on the troubled waters. The next year, Stambolov appeased the church by obtaining the sultan's consent to the creation of three new Bulgarian sees in Macedonia. He then appeared at another synod at Rustchuk, and persuaded or cajoled the bishops into an apparent reconciliation.

This was made necessary by the religious difficulties certain to attend the prince's marriage, which both he and his minister wished to bring about as soon as possible. Only when an heir stood ready to take his place could Ferdinand deem himself safe from the assassin's dagger. They would not kill him, he knew, to make Stambolov regent. His mother busied herself in finding him a wife. She aimed first at an Austrian archduchess or a British princess, but was unpleasantly reminded that an ostracised prince must not dare to look so high. In 1892 it was rumoured that he was betrothed to a Bavarian princess; then, it was reported, to a daughter of the comte de Paris.

Clémentine's choice at length fell upon the princess Maria Louise de Bourbon, the daughter of the last and dethroned duke of Parma. The betrothal was announced in March 1893, and Ferdinand went off to Italy to fetch his bride. Stambolov accompanied him, leaving Jivkov as regent. He knew that he had scotched the Russian intrigues for a time, and that the

country would be quiet in the absence of its rulers. At Vienna the Bulgarian statesman was received in private audience by the emperor, and later on had a long interview with Count Kalnoky. He satisfied the Austrian minister that his policy was favourable to the Triple Alliance.

The marriage was celebrated on April 20, at the castle of Pianore near Pietrasanta in the province of Lucca. There was a mighty concourse of Coburgs and Bourbons of Orleans and Italy. Uncrowned kings, the prince must have noticed, were ominously numerous. At the wedding breakfast Stambolov proposed the health of the bride. He voiced the joy of the Bulgarians at having a princess of their own again after a lapse of five hundred years. "Bulgaria is grateful to you," he said, turning to the duke of Parma, "for having confided your daughter to us. Bulgaria will honour and watch over her as its greatest treasure." Immediately after, the minister returned home to smooth the way of his lord. The princess was a staunch catholic, and had stipulated that any children of the marriage must be brought up in her faith.

In the previous December Stambolov had asked the Sobranje to guarantee this by a revision of the constitution. He found that bishop Clement was once more on the warpath, ready to protest against the prince's Romanising tendencies. The holy man was adroitly hoisted into a carriage and driven to a monastery near Trnovo, where he was kept under lock and key. On May 27 the amendment of the constitution was voted by the national assembly. Russia protested, but Stambolov did not mind. It

was the zenith of his power. On June 11 the prince and his bride entered Sofia. They were welcomed with frantic enthusiasm. The grim minister looked on and smiled. Perhaps he honestly thought that it was time to sing his *Nunc dimittis*. Seriously or not, he tendered his resignation to his highness, who kindly but firmly refused to accept it.

The Parmesan princess soon endeared herself to the Bulgarians, despite her zealous attachment to the Latin church. She was gracious, sweet-tempered, and sympathetic and simpler in her habits than her husband. She soon learned to speak the harsh tongue of the country; and almost as quickly fulfilled her special destiny, for her first child, a son, was born on January 30, 1894.

Immense was the delight of Ferdinand. He had founded a dynasty. For the first time since his election the crown seemed to sit firmly on his head. The people were as glad as he. Yet amid these rejoicings the cloud of ostracism loomed darker than ever. Ferdinand still felt that he was a princely pariah. His minister was received, but he was not. He had to creep into friendly courts by the back door. Outside Bulgaria none dared to salute him as a sovereign.

For years past his clever mother had intrigued and entreated in all the courts of Europe to obtain the coveted recognition. Not even the Coburgs of Belgium and Portugal dared to acknowledge their cousin in the face of the Russian veto. The sultan would not venture to present him with a match-box. In desperation, Ferdinand approached his old friend Prince Lobanov, the Russian ambassador at Vienna,

and wormed his way also into the good graces of his colleague in Paris, Baron Mohrenheim. His highness had repeated private interviews with these diplomatists, and at last induced Lobanov to ask the Tsar point-blank to recognise him. Alexander III. without hesitation refused.

To Stambolov this attitude of the powers seemed to be of no importance. Ferdinand, thanks to him, ruled in Bulgaria whether the rest of the world chose to admit it or not. He probably relished the snubs inflicted on his master. From the moment of his son's birth, the prince became less and less inclined to brook his minister's domination. The isolation in which he found himself chafed him. There can be no doubt that he looked upon Stambolov as the chief obstacle in the way of a reconciliation with the Tsar. For seven years now this man had stood behind his throne, beating off friends and foes alike. During the whole of that time the prince had never ceased to cherish the hope of being one day ruler in fact as well as in name. His spies reported to him that the country seethed with discontent, that Stambolov was detested, that the clergy and the people longed to be reconciled with the big brother in the north. The principality, thanks largely to Ferdinand, had made a rapid advance in civilisation, and was the less disposed to tolerate the brutality of the minister's methods. It was time, all agreed, to relax this Draconic rule. The Bashi-bazouks were no longer at Batak, nor the Russians on the Danube. The Bulgarians fancied themselves Europeans; Stambolov governed like a Turkish pasha.

The man knew that the people murmured against

him, and remarked that his highness grew more impatient daily of his deliberate discourtesy. But he still believed that he was the one man necessary to the nation. Word was brought to him that he was to be entrapped at the palace and forced at the pistol's muzzle to hand in his resignation. He taxed Ferdinand with the design, and scoffed at his denials. He had proposed on his return from Constantinople to take from the prince all control of the army. He had been successfully opposed in this by Colonel Racho Petrov, who had since become a great favourite at the palace. When Matkurov, the minister for war, died, Ferdinand put forward the colonel as his successor. Stambolov ignored his sovereign's wishes, and entrusted the portfolio to Major Savov. Ferdinand was angry and said so. The tyrant offered his resignation as usual, and as usual it was refused. Whether from gratitude or policy, the prince could not resolve to part with the man who had given him his crown. He took his wife and new-born child for a holiday to his old home at Ebenthal.

There strange rumours reached him. Stambolov and his own minister of war had become deadly enemies. First it was said that Savov had detected his patron's friend, Slavkov, in an intrigue with his wife, and had been refused redress ; next it was alleged that Stambolov himself was the lady's lover. Then came an appeal to the prince from the aggrieved husband, to be protected from the all-powerful minister. His highness tried to patch up peace. Savov resigned and went to Vienna. The prince insisted now that his portfolio should be given to Petrov. Stambolov, in a surly mood, gave way. No sooner was their

master's back turned than the two ministers began to quarrel fiercely. Accused of cowardice in not fighting Savov, the exasperated Stambolov published the husband's appeal to the prince. The news was telegraphed to Vienna. His highness promptly replied that Stambolov had been guilty of a *gemeiner That* (a common or vulgar act), and that he should be told so. The worm had turned at last. The astonished minister at once penned a long letter to his sovereign, expressing the hope that he would find another adviser, less common if not so devoted to the interests of the state; and added that his highness was rash to insult ministers who enjoyed more power than he suspected.

This telegram was handed to Ferdinand as he was on his way back, at Belgrade. On reaching Sofia, he sent for Stambolov. It was not to ask him to withdraw his resignation, which was accepted. His highness was willing, however, to entrust the presidency of the ministry to M. Grekov, one of the fallen statesman's party. This politician refused to step into his chief's shoes. A deadlock ensued. Telegrams poured in on the prince from all parts of the country. He was alternately besought to dismiss and to reinstate Stambolov. Next morning (May 30) he reviewed the troops at Bali Effendi. "Abandoned by all the parties," he said, "I look to the army for support."

As if in answer to this appeal, an attack upon the ex-premier's partisans was begun by a party of cadets. The town was presently in an uproar. A conflict between the police and the military was averted only by Stambolov's intervention. Next day a coalition ministry was formed, Stoïlov at its head. The pent-

up fury of the people was poured out on the head of the disgraced dictator. His house was surrounded by a threatening mob. The prince summoned him to the palace to receive his thanks. He was greeted affably, but on his return home determined attempts were made to lynch him. Ferdinand may or may not have acted fairly by his minister, but he had abundant evidence that his action was approved by the country at large. "Henceforth," quoth his highness, "I mean to rule as well as to reign."

He at once embarked on a policy of conciliation. Karavelov and other adversaries of the late régime were set at liberty, and a general amnesty permitted even the return of Zankov, who had conspired against the prince's own person. The Russophils came flocking back from Odessa and Belgrade. The new ministry was of course successful at the elections in September, and was soon after purged of its anti-Russian elements. At this opportune moment Alexander III. died. Bulgaria at once went into mourning. Ferdinand hastened to offer his condolences to Nicholas II., who was graciously pleased to acknowledge them. Even the implacable M. de Giers expressed himself grateful for the sympathy of Bulgaria. Stoïlov, speaking in the Sobranje, proclaimed the devotion of the government and the nation to the new Tsar. Prince Ferdinand, he declared, had shown himself at all times wishful for the friendship of Russia; the government would do all in its power to restore the old relations between the two Slav peoples. "But," he added, "we make no unconditional surrender. We insist upon our moral and territorial independence."

Stambolov, defeated at the elections, viewed these demonstrations with unspeakable disgust. Ever since his downfall, he had waged war against the prince and the ministry by means of his newspaper the *Svoboda*. Powerless he made himself almost more hateful to his enemies than when he was at the height of his power. He remained in Sofia, the police stationed at his doors, to watch his movements and to protect him from the fury of the mob. He vehemently appealed to Ferdinand to be delivered from this supervision and petty persecution. "Ah!" his highness is reported by one of Stambolov's friends to have said, "I daresay they are worrying him a little in revenge for his attacks upon them in his paper; that is all."

Thereupon Stambolov burst out into furious denunciations of the prince, maintaining that he alone was responsible for his ill-treatment. In this mood he was found by the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Into the willing ears of the journalist he poured a highly inflamed recital of his grievances, sparing not the prince, the powers, or the new ministers. On August 21 the report of the interview was published in every newspaper in Europe. On September 5 the ex-minister was charged before the tribunal of Sofia with having slandered the sovereign. He was released on bail, and was assailed with a storm of brickbats on his way back from the court. His villa at Trnovo was set on fire; but he never abated the violence of his attacks on those in authority. His printing press was confiscated, but he got his journal printed at another office. A parliamentary commission was appointed

to inquire into his administration. A law was passed to sequester his property. He protested against it as unconstitutional. "What!" remarked Ferdinand with excusable irony; "Stambolov, after his seven years' reign, protests against illegality!"

Stoïlov would have moderated the violence of the persecution, but the fallen Colossus proved his own worst enemy. He would not accept defeat, but continued to goad all his adversaries to madness. He became at last aware of his deadly peril. At the beginning of 1895 he told a German journalist that he knew a band of assassins had sworn to exact revenge for the execution of Panitzza. Among these men was Teufekchev, the brother of the youth his police had tortured to death in the course of the Belchev inquiry. "If I must fall," he predicted, "my friends will not desert my wife and children. In influential circles care will be taken that telegrams are sent from 'all Bulgaria' denouncing the murderers, but expressing in the liveliest terms the satisfaction of 'the people' at being freed for ever from 'the tyrant' and 'the adulterer.'"

He begged for permission to leave Bulgaria. It was cruelly refused. Ferdinand did not want him to go round Europe, telling tales about him. His highness went off to Carlsbad instead. Whether he knew what was about to happen, it would be unsafe to say. At about eight o'clock in the evening of July 15, Stambolov and his friend Petkov left the Union Club and sprang into an open carriage, which seems to have been stationed there to entrap them. The minister's trusty servant Guntcho mounted the box. They had driven only a few yards when three men armed with

a revolver and knives rushed forward to attack them. The driver whipped up his horses, but the two politicians and the servant sprang out on the opposite side of the vehicle. Petkov and Guntcho were thrown to the ground in leaping. Stambolov ran, but was overtaken by the three assassins. With their knives they nearly severed his right hand from his wrist, and slashed his arms into ribbons. Guntcho, rushing up, fired at the miscreants, who fled. Captain Morvov, who had led a riot against Stambolov, hurried to the spot, arrested Guntcho, and allowed the murderers time to escape. The wounded man was carried to his house close by. His hands were amputated, and he lingered in great agony for three days. On July 18, 1895, he was dead.

The people, forgetful of his great services, remembered only his tyranny. They rejoiced at his death. Petkov was not allowed by the mob to pronounce a panegyric over his remains, and during the interment they adorned the graves of the four men hanged for the killing of Belchev. Ferdinand at Carlsbad, appeared overwhelmed with sorrow. He telegraphed the expression of his sympathy to Madame Stambolov, and ordered the court marshal to lay a wreath upon the coffin. The wreath was refused, and the widow contemptuously rejected every mark of respect from the court. She accused the prince of being a party to the murder of her husband. The charge was vociferated by the *Svoboda*, and echoed through Europe.

Nearly eighteen months afterwards, Nouma Teufekchev was tried for the crime. The widow was summoned before the court. "I have nothing to say,"

she began, "because I do not see arraigned here those who are known to be the real assassins of my husband. You know them, Mr. President, and you too, attorney-general. Is it not so?" The court was silent. "You know them, as all the world does. Where are they? I do not see them. Acquit this miserable man, and summon before you the really guilty men—the present government. I have nothing to add." And she withdrew. None questioned her or denied her dreadful accusation. The men in the dock escaped with light terms of imprisonment. One of Stambolov's hands is still preserved. It is to be buried on the day he is avenged.

His life was accepted as an offering to the manes of Alexander III. A Bulgarian deputation, headed by the metropolitan Clement, had gone to St. Petersburg to lay a wreath on the dead Tsar's tomb, and was received in audience by his son on the eve of Stambolov's death. Bulgaria went wild with joy at the prospect of a reconciliation with her big brother. The deputation upon its return was accorded a popular ovation, and Clement, blessing the multitude, proclaimed that his mission had been prompted not only by the people but the prince. Ferdinand welcomed the deputation with much ceremony, and in his speech at the opening of the Sobranje on October 31 expressed his hope that formal relations with the liberators of Bulgaria would shortly be established.

They were only to be established, the catholic prince soon learned, at a heavy sacrifice from his conscience. On December 10 his wife gave birth to a second son, who, conformably to the marriage contract, was baptised according to the rite of the

Roman church. Clement and the ministers told the prince frankly that the time had come for the heir to the throne to be reconciled with the national church. For this Russia was waiting. In vain Ferdinand pleaded that he had given his word to his wife, and that article 38 of the constitution had been abrogated at the time of his marriage. A family council was held at Coburg, which decided, as might have been foreseen, that this last concession should be made.

Still uneasy in his conscience, his highness betook himself to Rome and laid the matter before his holiness. The interview was by no means of an agreeable character ; yet Ferdinand, in spite of his wife's passionate remonstrances, announced to the parliament on February 4, 1896, that he " had resolved to lay on the altar of the fatherland the greatest and heaviest of sacrifices," and that the heir-apparent would be solemnly reconciled with the national orthodox church. The deputies then proceeded to the palace to congratulate the prince on his decision. In his reply he suggested that the press might now cease insulting him. " The West," he concluded, " has pronounced its anathema against me. The morning light of the East illumines my dynasty and casts its rays over our future." The East indeed smiled with the rosiest glow. The Tsar in an official communiqué announced that Ferdinand's sacrifice had filled him with deep satisfaction, and that he had consented to stand, by proxy, sponsor to the princely neophyte.

The princess Marie Louise refused to witness or countenance this apostasy, and departed for the Riviera without any pretence at an *incognito*. The

ceremony took place with great pomp on February 14. Baby Boris wept during the process of conversion, and his profession of faith was pronounced by the Tsar's representative, Count Golenishev Kutusov. Excommunicated by his church, discarded for a time by his wife, Ferdinand may have been somewhat consoled by the evident gratitude of his people.

The sacrifice was not in vain. In the following month he was formally recognised by the sultan as prince of Bulgaria and governor-general of Eastern Roumelia. He went to Constantinople to thank his suzerain, and was received with unprecedented honours. He attended the coronation of the Tsar, at whose request he was recognised by the president of the French republic. He was greeted with proper princely honours at Paris. Then one by one the powers, great and small, became officially aware of a sovereign who had been such for nine years past.

The ambition of Ferdinand was by no means satisfied. From the moment of his recognition as prince, he set his heart on the royal title. But the pear was not yet ripe; and he settled down in the last years of the century to build up a powerful state. He was now the strongest man in his dominions, and such he determined to remain. He had not dismissed Stambolov merely to become the tool of his own opponents. He saw much virtue in the party system, which creates a balance of power and makes an able ruler the final arbiter of the nation's destinies. So to Russophiles and Russophobes, to conservatives and liberals, he gave alternate leases of power, careful that none should secure an absolute ascendancy.

The country prospered, despite the chaotic state

of its finances. Sofia, from a wretched oriental township, grew into a tolerable European capital. Railways were built, education made rapid strides. Under the prince's jealous care, the army developed into a most efficient fighting machine. In the complications of Balkan politics it might at any moment be required. And Ferdinand, exulting in the exercise of his statecraft, managed the foreign relations of his crown himself. In 1897 he backed the winning horse: he stood by his suzerain in the war with Greece, and if his subjects grumbled that he had gained no material advantage by his attitude, he probably considered that he had gained by the goodwill of Europe.

His wife died in 1899, twenty-four hours after the birth of her fourth child. His mother now spent much of her time in Bulgaria, and not improbably spurred him on towards the coveted kingship. His cousins of Belgium and Portugal were kings, why not he, who possessed more power at home than either? The people, rude and unimaginative, cared not at all about their ruler's title; indeed they have never, except at such moments as his son's conversion, cared about him personally. They were roused from their sluggishness by the outbreak of war in Macedonia, at their own door.

Dreams of a big Bulgaria haunted Ferdinand. He aimed at playing the part of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel in the Balkan struggle for independence. His game was a difficult one to play. Macedonian refugees flocked across the border, fraternised with his subjects, and plotted in Sofia against their Turkish lord. As the ruler of Bulgaria, Ferdinand was bound

to sympathise with them, as the vassal of the Porte he was bound to suppress them. His friendship with the sultan cooled. In 1900 he vaguely threatened to proclaim his absolute independence. He was constrained, even at the risk of deposition, to check the activities of the rebels, and found himself on the verge of war with Roumania when the Macedonian ringleaders conspired beneath his palace windows against King Carol's life.

His was no bed of roses. Knives were flashing beyond the frontier and might any day be sheathed in his heart. In 1903 Alexander of Serbia was foully murdered; in 1907 Ferdinand's minister Petkov met the fate he had so narrowly escaped in the company of Stambolov twelve years before. Because he could not free Macedonia, the students hissed their sovereign at the theatre; and in the same year his mother, his best and wisest friend, died in the palace in Vienna, to which her husband had first brought her nearly sixty years before.

Henceforward, Ferdinand was his own ambassador, as he had so far been foreign minister. He travelled incessantly from court to court, till the sight of his flag above the palace came as a shock to his subjects. He tried to play off one power against another, and laboured to persuade the diplomatists of Europe that they could look for peace in the Balkans only when he was acknowledged as king of a greater Bulgaria. He courted the favour of Austria rather than of Russia, and made a friend of the old emperor's heir and adviser, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

Then came a lull in the Macedonian turmoil; there was no mission for Bulgaria there. Next came

the news of the Ottoman revolution—Abdul Hamid a prisoner, promise of a strong, united Turkey. Both Ferdinand and his powerful ally knew that the time had come to act. The nominal suzerainty of the Porte over Bulgaria and Bosnia was to be asserted anew by these regenerated Ottomans. From a banquet given by the new government to the diplomatic body, the Bulgarian agent was excluded. We all remember what followed : how the administered provinces were formally incorporated within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and how, on October 8, 1908, Ferdinand proclaimed the absolute independence of his dominions and set on his brow the crown of the ancient Tsars of Bulgaria.

INDEX OF NAMES

- Abdul Hamed II., 336
 Aberdeen, Lord, 83, 85, 190 *et seq.*, 218
 Adair, Sir Robert, 118
 Adelaide, Queen, 121
 Albert, margrave of Meissen, 15, 19,
 Albert, Prince Consort, birth and education, 162-164; meets Queen Victoria, 165; betrothed, 169; marriage, 172; and the Spanish marriages, 194, 199; unpopularity, 217; visits Napoleon, 220; and Lord Palmerston, 215; death, 228; estimate of character, 228
 Alexander I., Tsar of Russia, 36, 37, 43, 45, 47, 56
 Alexander II., Tsar of Russia, 222
 Alexander III., Tsar of Russia, 324-327
 Alexander, duke of Wurtemberg, 36
 Alexander of Battenberg, prince of Bulgaria, 300, 301
 Almonte, general, 241 *et seq.*
 Anna, duchess of Coburg, 24
 Anne of Cleves, 21, 24, 27
 Antoinette, duchess of Wurtemberg, 35, 36, 38, 43
 Antonia, princess of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, 279
 Aosta, duke of, 280
 August, prince of Coburg Kohary, 137, 190, 191, 207, 295
 Augusta, princess of Wales, 29
 Augusta, duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, 35, 41
 Augusto, infante of Portugal, 265, 273, 274
 Augustus, elector, 23
 Aumale, duke of, 192

 Basmadziev, 313
 Bazaine, general, 247, 248, 253, 256, 258, 259
 Belchev, 315
 Belliard, general, 117
 Benedetti, 289
 Bernard of Saxe-Weimer, 27
 Berry, duchess of, 80
 Bismarck, 283

 Bois le Comte, 154
 Bonaparte, Prince Jerome, 219
 Boris, Prince, 333
 Bourboulon, comte de, 308
 Bresson, 104, 193, 197
 Buddberg, general de, 35
 Bulwer, Henry, 192 *et seq.*

 Cadiz, duke of, 188, 192, 200
 Campbell, Lord Chief Justice, 218
 Caroline of Brunswick, Queen, 53, 74
 Castelar, 284
 Castelnau, general, 256, 258
 Catharine II., Empress, 35
 Catharine of Hessberg, 17
 Cavour, 223
 Chadourne, 316
 Charles V., Emperor, 20, 21
 Charles, king of Roumania, 335
 Charlotte, empress of Mexico, 215, 222, 235-263
 Charlotte, Princess, 53-65
 Chassé, general, 113, 129
 Christian, duke of Saxe-Eisenberg, 25, 28
 Christina, queen of Spain, 188 *et seq.*
 Clement, Metropolitan, 320, 322, 331
 Clementine, Princess, 166, 190, 191, 295, 297
 Cobbett, 128
 Constantine, Grand-duke, 35, 47, 48
 Conyngham, Lady, 75
 Costa Cabral, count of Thomar, 182 *et seq.*, 201
 Cranach, Lucas, 20
 Crispi, 310
 Cunegonda, landgravine, 15
 Cust, Sir E., 107

 Dadiani, Prince Nicholas, 302
 Daine, general, 116
 Delawarr, Lord, 29
 Derby, Lord, 218
 Devaux, J., 102
 Dietz, 146, 154, 184, 201, 204
 Domontovics, general, 312
 Drummond, Don A., 184

- Dumouriez, 31
 Durham, Lord, 31
- Edinburgh, Alfred, duke of, 269
 Edla, countess of. See Hensler, Mlle.
- Eldon, Lord, 54, 65
 Eloin, 256
 Enrique, Don, 193, 287
 Ernest, elector of Saxony, 19
 Ernest, the Pious, duke of Gotha, 27
 Ernest I., duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, 35, 37, 40, 42, 43, 46, 48, 134, 157, 161, 194
 Ernest II., duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, birth and education, 162; visits England, 172; visits Portugal, 180, 194; wins battle of Eckernförde, 210; visits Napoleon, 111, 219; declines throne of Greece, 272
 Ernroth, general, 310
 Escobedo, general, 260
 Eu, Gaston, count of, 279
 Eugenie, Empress, 240
- Ferdinand, Prince, afterwards Tsar, of Bulgaria, career 296-336
 Ferdinand, king-consort of Portugal, birth, 137; marries Maria da Gloria, 145; unpopularity, 151; life at court, 181; builds Pena palace, 186; marches against Saldanha, 204; regent, 264; refuses crown of Greece, 270; of Spain, 278 *et seq.*; marries Mlle. Hensler, 281; dies, 293
 Ferdinand, prince of Coburg Kohary, 38, 39, 44, 47, 61, 294
 Fernandez, de los Rios, 276 *et seq.*
 Figuerola, 276
 Fleischmann, 308
 Florschütz, 163
 Fontes de Mello, 290
 Forey, general, 242
 Francis, duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, 35, 37, 40
 Francis, Ferdinand, Archduke, 336
 Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria, 244, 246, 261
 Frederick IV., duke of Gotha, 157
 Frederick the Benignant, landgrave, 17
 Frederick the Bitten, landgrave, 15
 Frederick the Pugnacious, landgrave, 17
 Frederick, the Wise, elector, 20
 Frederick Josias, prince of Coburg, 31, 41
 Frederick William III., king of Prussia, 38, 47
 Frederick William IV., king of Prussia, 210, 219, 221
 Frossard, general, 245
- Gendebien, 99, 103
 Gentz, Chevalier de, 60
 George II. of England, 29
 George III. of England, 29
 George IV. of England, 53, 74, 99
 Georgios I. of Greece, 272
 Gerard, Marshal, 117, 118, 129
 Gerlache, de, 113
 Giers, M. de, 327
 Goblet, 138, 151
 Gracia Real, countess of, 185
 Grant, general, 292
 Grekov, 205, 326
 Grenaud, Comte de, 308
 Grey, Lord, 101, 127
 Grumbach, 23
 Guizot, 113, 189, 191
 Gutierrez de Estrada, 237 *et seq.*
- Henry the Illustrious, 15
 Hensler, Mlle. Elise Frederica, 266, 281
 Hidalgo, 240, 243
 Hitrovo, M., 314
 Hoflender, Herr, 38
 Hortense, Queen, 45, 50
 Howard de Walden, 128, 149, 182
- Isabella II. of Spain, 188, 272, 274
 Isabella, infanta of Spain, 273
 Isabella, infanta of Brazil, 294
- Jacobsen, 312, 314
 John the Constant, 21
 John, prince of Portugal, 265
 John Casimir, duke of Coburg, 23
 John Ernest of Saxony, 23
 John Fred. I., elector, 21
 John Fred. II., duke of Weimar, 22
 John William, duke of Weimar, 24, 27
 John William of Gotha, 28
 Joseph II., 31
 Juarez, president, 238, 241, 260 *et seq.*

- Juliana, Grand-duchess, 35, 47, 48
 Kalchev, 305
 Kalnoky, Count, 310, 322
 Kalubkov, 312
 Kapodistrias, 79-92, 134
 Karavelov, 315
 Kaulbars, general, 302
 Keglevich Mattachich, Count, 296
 Kent, Edward, duke of, 62, 71, 72
 Kent, Victoria, duchess of, 38, 59, 71, 164, 227
 Kissov, 313
 Kohary, Countess Antonio, 61
 Kretschmann, Commissioner, 37, 41, 43
 Kunz von Kaufungen, 18
 Laabe, Major, 305
 Labastida, Major, 240
 Lavradio, Count, 139, 147
 Lebeau, 104, 107, 115
 Lehzen, Baroness, 167, 173
 Leiningen, prince of, 38, 59
 Leiningen, princess of. See Kent, duchess of
 Leopold I., king of the Belgians, birth and education, 38; visits Napoleon, 43, 45; at battle of Kulm, 48; marries Princess Charlotte, 64; refuses crown of Greece, 90; candidate for crown of Belgium, 102; enthroned, 113; defeated at Louvain, 119; marries Louise of Orleans, 125; and revolution of 1848, 208; opposes Crimean war, 221; visits Napoleon, 111, 220; death and appreciation, 233
 Leopold II., king of the Belgians, 215, 220
 Leopold, prince of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, 279, 283
 Leopold, prince of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, 137, 189, 199
 Leuchtenberg, duke of, 103, 104, 136
 Lobanov, Prince, 297, 306, 323
 Loisinger, Mlle., 301
 Lopez, Marshal, 260
 Lothaire, emperor, 14
 Louis, crown prince of Bavaria, 46, 134
 Louis XVIII., king of France, 49
 Louis, prince of Coburg Kohary, 296
 Louis Philip, king of the French, 103, 117, 131, 191, 200, 207, 215
 Louisa, duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, 158-162
 Louisa, queen of the Belgians, 125, 200, 215
 Louisa, Princess, 295
 Loulé, marquis of, 266
 Luisa Fernanda, infanta, 192
 Luiz, king of Portugal, 265, 272, 276
 Luther, Martin, 20
 Magnus, Baron, 261
 Marcos, Father, 147
 Maria II. da Gloria, queen of Portugal, 135, 136, 143, 148, 201, 205
 Maria Louisa, princess of Bulgaria 321, 332, 334
 Maria Pia, queen of Portugal, 272, 287
 Marie Amélie, queen of the French, 244, 297
 Mason and Slidell, 228
 Matkurov, 313, 324
 Maurice, elector of Saxony, 22
 Maximilian, emperor of Mexico, 216, 222, 235-263
 Mejia, general, 260
 Melbourne, Lord, 169, 171, 173
 Mensdorff-Pouilly, Emanuel de, 36, 44
 Mercier de Lostende, 288
 Mérode, Felix de, 99
 Metternich, 208
 Miguel, Dom, 135
 Miramon, general, 260, 262
 Miranda, Father, 249
 Mohrenheim, Baron, 324
 Montpensier, duc de, 192, 200, 272, 275
 Morny, duc de, 245
 Napoleon I., 39, 43, 46, 61
 Napoleon III., 215, 218, 220, 226, 240 *et seq.*, 272
 Narvaez, general, 192
 Nassau, Adolf, count of, 15
 Nemours, duke of, 103, 104, 136, 168, 187, 207
 Nemours, duchess of, 187, 294
 Nicholas I., Tsar of Russia, 221
 Nicholas II., Tsar of Russia, 327, 332
 Niza, marquis de, 276 *et seq.*
 O'Horan, general, 252
 Oldoini, Marquis, 279
 Ollivier, Adolphe, 287

- Olózaga, 288
 Orsini, 224
 Otto, king of Greece, 134, 269
 Otto, margrave of Meissen, 15
- Palmella, duke of, 202
 Palmerston, Lord, 116, 119, 136, 198, 211 *et seq.*, 219, 271
 Panitza, major, 312, 314
 Pedro I., emperor of Brazil, 135, 136
 Pedro II., emperor of Brazil, 294
 Pedro V., king of Portugal, 264
 Peel, Sir Robert, 172, 174, 176
 Petkov, 325, 329, 335
 Philip, prince of Coburg, 295
 Pius IX., 255
 Pölzig, Alexander von, 162
 Ponsonby, Lord, 107, 109
 Popov, major, 312
 Prim, marshal, 241, 242, 274, 280-291
- Radoslavov, 313
 Rogier, 99
 Russell, Lord John, 211, 218,
 Russell, Lord William, 118
- Sà da Bandeira, 149, 153, 156, 203
 Sagasta, 276, 280
 Saldanha, marshal, 151, 152, 201 *et seq.*, 264, 283, 287
 Salisbury, marquis of, 310
 Salm Salm, princess of, 262
 Santa Anna, general, 238
 Savov, major, 325
 Schofield, general, 253
 Scotto, 24
 Seissal, Vizconde de, 279
 Sigmund, emperor, 17
 Sigmund, bishop, 17
 Simeon, bishop of Varna, 320
 Slidell and Mason, 228
 Smissen, colonel van der, 248
 Sophia Antoinette, duchess of Coburg-Saalfeld, 30
 Sophia, countess of Mensdorff-Pouilly, 35, 36
 Sotomayor, duke of, 209
 Stambolov, Stepan, 302, 306 *et seq.*
 Stancioff, 308
 Stephanie, of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, queen of Portugal, 265
- Stockmar, Baron, 64, 66, 110, 112, 120, 127, 137, 166, 173, 176, 189, 217, 225, 230
 Stoilov, 305, 329
 Surllet de Chokier, 104, 109
 Sybilla, electress, 21
 Szymborski, 158, 161
- Talleyrand, 121
 Tausendschön, 23
 Tegethoff, admiral, 263
 Terceira, duke of, 183
- Valdemar of Denmark, 302
 Vandeweyer, 99, 146, 151
 Victor Emmanuel, 11, 272
 Victoria, Queen, birth, 72; accession, 166; opposition from Tory party, 170; marries Prince Albert, 172; opinion of the Spanish marriages, 200; quarrel with Palmerston, 211; meets Francis Joseph, 230
 Victoria of Coburg Kohary. See Nemours, duchess of.
 Victoria of Leiningen. See Kent, duchess of.
 Vulkovics, Dr., 316
- Walewski, 245
 Walpole, Mr., 218
 Wangenheim, Count marshal, von, 37
 Wellington, Duke of, 76, 83, 127, 216
 Wettin, house of, 14
 William IV., king of England, 100, 164
 William I., king of the Netherlands, 94, 114, 130, 132
 William II., king of the Netherlands (prince of Orange), 55, 57, 83, 98, 101, 104, 115, 117, 132, 165
 William I., prince, afterwards king of Prussia, 221, 225, 226, 227, 283, 289
 William, landgrave of Thuringia, 17
- Yturbide, emperor of Mexico, 237
 Yturbide (son), 254
- Zankov, 313
 Zorilla, 276

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